

Teacher's Guide

FOR

7 Generations series

BY NIIGANWEWIDAM JAMES SINCLAIR



7 Generations series

by David Alexander Robertson

illustrated by Scott B. Henderson

HIGHWATER
PRESS



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Teacher's Guide for 7 Generations series

Excerpts from the *Teacher's Guide for Helen Betty Osborne: A Graphic Novel*
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INTRODUCTION

The four-book graphic-novel series, *7 Generations*, follows the story of one Aboriginal family from the early 19th century to the present day.

Book 1, *Stone* introduces Edwin, a young, lost Aboriginal man who must understand his family's past if he is to have any future. In this book, Edwin learns about the life of his ancestor Stone, a young Plains Cree man who lived in the 19th century.

In Book 2, *Scars*, Edwin continues his quest to learn about, understand, and embrace his family's past. His mother tells him the story of White Cloud, an ancestor who was alive during the smallpox epidemic of 1870–1871.

Book 3: *Ends/Begins* tells the story of Edwin's father and his residential school experience.

Book 4: *The Pact* is a story of redemption, as father and son reconcile their past and begin a new journey.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

David Robertson is an Aboriginal writer who lives in Winnipeg, Manitoba. He wrote his first book, “The Bestest Poems I Ever Sawed,” in grade 3. He received his BA in English from the University of Winnipeg. His realization that education could combat racism and sexism inspired him to write the graphic novel *The Life of Helen Betty Osborne*, published in 2008. David lives in Winnipeg with his wife and children, and works in the field of Aboriginal employment.

Scott B. Henderson is a graduate of the University of Manitoba's School of Art. Scott's many projects include work as a colourist and illustrator for comics, portraiture, advertising art, and, most recently, two World War II web comics for the Canadian Air Force's series, *For Valour*. Scott is also the author and illustrator of the sci-fi/fantasy comic, *The Books of Era*.

MANITOBA CURRICULUM CORRELATIONS

English Language Arts

- General Learning Outcomes 1–5

Grade 9 Social Studies

- Cluster 1: Diversity and Pluralism in Canada

Grade 11 History of Canada

- First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples
- Identity, Diversity, and Citizenship

Physical Education

- General Learning Outcome for Personal Development

Diversity and Equity

- Belonging, Learning, and Growing: Kindergarten to Grade 12 Action Plan for Ethnocultural Equity

Grade 11 and 12 Family Studies

NOTE: Check the Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth website for further details. Go to: <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/index.html>.

NOTE: On page 4, Aboriginal Perspectives, Human Diversity & Anti-Racism/Anti-Bias Education are excerpts from <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/>.

ABORIGINAL PERSPECTIVES

Aboriginal perspectives are being integrated into curricula to enable students to learn the history of Canada before European settlement and to give the perspective of Aboriginal peoples since that time. Each subject area will address the perspectives and accomplishments of Aboriginal peoples, as appropriate. The goal in integrating Aboriginal perspectives into curricula is to ensure that all students have opportunities to understand and respect themselves, their cultural heritage, and the cultural heritage of others.

Aboriginal perspectives apply to learning experiences for all students. However, there may be unique and particular learning experiences that apply specifically to Aboriginal students. Aboriginal students are learners and participants in Aboriginal cultures, not necessarily experts in the culture. Their knowledge about their culture may be the same as that of other students in the class, but if they do have extensive knowledge about their culture, it can benefit the entire class.

All students learn in a variety of ways, and this should be taken into consideration to maximize learning for Aboriginal students as well. The intent is to ensure that high expectations in supported learning environments apply to Aboriginal students just as they do to non-Aboriginal students.

Goals of Aboriginal Perspectives for Aboriginal Students

- To develop a positive self-identity through learning their own histories, cultures, and contemporary lifestyles
- To participate in a learning environment that will equip them with the knowledge and skills needed to participate more fully in the unique civic and cultural realities of their communities

Goals of Aboriginal Perspectives for Non-Aboriginal Students

- To develop an understanding and respect for the histories, cultures, and contemporary lifestyles of Aboriginal peoples
- To develop informed opinions on matters relating to Aboriginal peoples

HUMAN DIVERSITY

Canada is a rich mosaic of people with a diversity of cultures, languages, religions, and other characteristics. These aspects of human diversity should be recognized, accepted, & celebrated to create learning environments that

- Prepare all students for full participation in society
- Provide students with opportunities for cultural and linguistic development
- Encourage intercultural understanding and harmony

ANTI-RACISM/ANTI-BIAS EDUCATION

Effective schools strive to create and maintain inclusive school programs and environments that welcome diversity and challenge bias and discrimination. An anti-bias and anti-racism educational approach is a critical element in the development of curriculum documents and school environments, allowing students to experience learning in a safe environment where they can develop the required knowledge and skills.

USING GRAPHIC NOVELS IN THE CLASSROOM

Graphic novel is a term used by librarians and educators to identify a specific publishing format – a book written and illustrated in the style of a comic book. This is quickly becoming a compelling genre for use in the school system. Graphic novels engage students and motivate them to read. Graphic novels appear to be particularly popular with boys and struggling readers – students who are traditionally difficult to reach. Graphic novels generally have rich, complex plots and narrative structures that can satisfy all readers. However, the format can help improve reading comprehension for many students who struggle, because the illustrations provide contextual clues that enrich meaning and support understanding. Reading graphic novels can help students develop the critical skills necessary to read more challenging texts.

If students are unfamiliar with graphic novels, explain that a graphic novel is a story with text and pictures. Demonstrate that graphic novels provide several entry points into understanding, and discuss with students how these features can help them understand the story. Some features to consider include:

- facial expressions
- landscapes
- sound effects
- captions
- dialogue
- points of view
- sequences
- body language and relationships

It would be helpful to provide a variety of graphic novels for students to look through, having them note the similarities to and differences from other books they have read. Discuss how a graphic novel can be read: from left to right frame, top to bottom frame, and from highest to lowest speech balloon inside a frame. Then, ask your students the following questions:

- How are graphic novels the same as other novels?
- How are graphic novels the same as comic books?
- Are graphic novels “real books”?
- How many of you have read graphic novels before? If you have, how was the experience enjoyable or not so enjoyable? Why, or why not?

DISCUSSING CULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM

What Is Culture?

Culture exists in virtually every facet of human existence. If asked, most would say that culture is music, literature, art, architecture, or language – and they would be right. But culture is more than this. It is what we think, do, and feel. It is what is taught, learned, and shared both to us and by us. Culture plays a central role in the way meaning is understood and made and is distinctly tied to language, experience, and history. It is a body of knowledge that people have made together over a long period of time and that can be influenced by many different factors, including geography, communication, and sharing. It is the often-invisible forces acting at work that explain why people do the things they do, as well as their complex and diverse underpinnings.

What Is Cultural Awareness?

Cultural awareness involves the ability of individuals to consider how people embody cultural values, beliefs, and perceptions emerging from the communities and histories of which they are a part. It constitutes a critical foundation for communication and begins to ask questions such as: Why do people do the things they do? Why do certain peoples see the world the way they do? Why do peoples react in a certain way?

People see, interpret, and evaluate things in different ways. What is considered appropriate behaviour in one culture may be considered inappropriate in another. Misunderstandings arise when one person uses his/her cultural meanings to make sense of others’ realities.

Becoming aware of cultural dynamics is hard, because culture is often invisible and unconscious. It is influenced by myriad factors including community, history, ideology, politics, economics, religion, and power. Individual experiences and ideas also play significant roles.

While culture exists in virtually every facet of human existence, in different ways and different levels of depth, manifestations of culture can be most easily found in the following:

- Symbols – certain words, gestures, pictures, or objects that carry shared value and meaning in certain historical and social contexts
- Heroes – real or fictitious people, past or present, who are valorized and celebrated for having done great acts or achieved something
- Rituals – collective activities that are often carried out for distinct purposes related to tradition, belief, or other social outcomes
- Values – these are most often identified by collectively determined activities, beliefs, and functions that are considered good, right, or natural vs. those that are considered evil, wrong, or unnatural. These are usually the bases of a community’s laws, institutions, and family structures
- Stories – narratives that embody the collective knowledge of a people (i.e., myth, legend, song, etc.)

Culture can be national, regional, gender-based, generational, social, class-based, and ethnic. All communities can lead human beings to see, act, and do things in particular ways and even in contradictory ways. Examining all of these is important to understanding and becoming aware of the cultural makeup of nations,

communities, and individuals – particularly in our increasingly globalized world.

WHAT IS RACISM?

Racism is the belief that race is a primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular group – in other words, members of one race are intrinsically superior to members of other races. Racism is virtually always associated with power seekers and with forces seeking inequality, and includes violent actions such as harassment, prejudice, discrimination, and stereotyping. Racism is embodied in discriminatory actions and behaviours toward members of a race simply because they are members of it. By nature, racism involves myopic, simplistic, and reductive thinking.

Combating racism involves thought and action in the interests of equality and peace – thought in the form of critical thinking, reason, and hope; action in terms of education, dialogue, and activism. Perhaps the best vision of this two-pronged approach is articulated by Dr. Martin Luther King in his famous speech “I Have a Dream” on August 28, 1963. Speaking to an America divided by a long history of slavery, racial segregation, and centuries-long resentments, Dr. King stated: “I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.”

NOTE: The full text of King’s speech is available at <<http://www.usconstitution.net/dream.html>>.

Dr. King’s dream – that racism could be combated with hope, patience, and love – remains an inspiration today. One does not have to be from any specific religious domination, political background, or ideology to understand what King meant: People from different backgrounds, if they are to co-exist, must be willing to listen, learn, and live with each other. This is how equality is achieved.

WHAT IS STEREOTYPING?

Stereotyping is a fixed and general set of characteristics or images believed to be true or essential about a community or group of peoples. It influences the way individuals are treated by those who assume how they will behave, often before they even enter the room. Stereotyping is almost always harmful and leads to

discrimination, prejudice and, when institutionalized, inevitably leads to abuse, violence, and societal disharmony. One way of engaging and dispelling stereotypes is to become culturally aware while, at the same time, becoming *critically aware* – thinking rationally and reflecting upon all contexts and reasons available that explain a situation. This may, at times, result in conclusions of cultural ambiguity and contradiction.

INCORPORATING ABORIGINAL PERSPECTIVES IN THE CLASSROOM

Canadian departments of education support inclusion of Aboriginal cultural concepts in teaching and learning situations. They encourage educators to seek the guidance of local community people who are most knowledgeable about the appropriate use of cultural concepts specific and/or unique to the context. It is important that students have the opportunity to develop a respectful and balanced view of Aboriginal peoples and Canadian culture and a richer understanding of the place of Aboriginal peoples in the history of Canada.

ESTABLISHING A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS

Providing opportunities for meaningful dialogue and creating an atmosphere of trust in discussions are critical steps to helping students deepen their understanding of what they read. The Talking Circle is an excellent teaching strategy that is consistent with Aboriginal values and perspectives. In a Talking Circle, each participant is equal, and each one belongs. Students in a Talking Circle learn to listen and respect the views of others. A stick, stone, or feather (something that symbolizes connectedness to the land) can be used to facilitate the circle. Whoever is holding the object has the right to speak, and the others have the responsibility to listen. Douglas Cardinal explains, “When you put your knowledge in a circle, it’s not yours anymore, it’s shared by everyone” (Regina *Leader Post*, November 28, 1995).

The Talking Circle

The Talking Circle:

- Is consistent with Aboriginal values of respecting all views and including all voices.
- Is a powerful symbol of connectivity and completeness; the circle is the earth, the sky, the sun, the moon, the teepee, the seasons, the cycle of life.
- Presents a place where everyone is equal, where all can have a say.
- Represents a place for healing, where the heart can be unburdened and words of consolation can be freely spoken.
- Supports students in learning how to listen respectfully and to express their ideas without fear of ridicule.
- Incorporates a talking stick, feather, or stone that can be held by the speaker to signal that she or he now has the right to speak and the others have the responsibility to listen.
- Helps students develop confidence in presenting their views, exchanging ideas, examining concepts, raising questions, and exploring ideas.
- Provides an appropriate framework for learning to respect and appreciate differences between groups.

NOTE: More information on using Talking Circles in the classroom is available at the Saskatchewan Education website: <saskschools.ca/curr_content/aboriginal_res/supplem.htm#talk>.

READING AND RESPONDING TO THE TEXT

1. Activating (before reading)

The graphic-novel series *7 Generations* addresses and embodies many diverse and complex parts of Aboriginal cultural and political history in what is now known as Canada. The four books in the series are sensitive, emotional, and provocative. They often tell a story that is different from some mainstream representations of Aboriginal peoples, engaging students in alternative ways of knowing and perceiving the world through Aboriginal experience and knowledge. The texts also provide important ways to explore humanity, addressing such issues as family, community, and spirituality. It is, therefore, important to provide students with a contextual

frame and some background thinking and information before engaging in any issues emerging from the *7 Generations* series. It is also important that a supportive and open environment is facilitated where students can confront difficult issues and topics in a healthy and nonthreatening way.

NOTE: In this Teacher's Guide, the term *Plains Cree* is used, predominantly because this is the term most often used in educational and reference materials. However, the term used by Plains Cree citizens to describe themselves is *Nêhiyawak*. For pronunciations of the Cree language, including several different dialects, see the following links:

- Nehiyaw Masinahikan: The Online Cree Dictionary www.creedictionary.com/
- Nehinawe: Speak Cree <http://nisto.com/cree/>
- Languagegeek: Cree www.languagegeek.com/argon/cree/nehiyawewin.html
- The Gift of Language and Culture Website www.giftoflanguageandculture.ca/

Major Themes

(i) The Setting

- On a map, show the traditional territories of the Cree nation and how these lands have changed from centuries ago to today. The Cree refer to themselves collectively as *Nêhilawê* (which means “those who speak our language”). They call themselves Cree only when speaking English or French. Examine and explore the eight predominant cultural and political sub-groups that make up most of the Cree Nation:
 - › *The Naskapi* (Innu inhabitants of the *Nitassinan* – in eastern Quebec and Labrador)
 - › *The Montagnais* (Innu inhabitants of the *Nitassinan* – in eastern Quebec and Labrador)
 - › *The Attikamekw* (inhabitants of the *Nitaskinan* – in the upper St. Maurice valley of Quebec)
 - › The Grand Council of the Crees or James Bay Cree (inhabitants of the James Bay and *Nunavik* regions of northern Quebec)
 - › The Moose Factory Cree (inhabitants of the southern end of James Bay)
 - › The *Nêhinawak* or Swampy Cree (inhabitants of northern Manitoba along the Hudson Bay coast and in Ontario along the coast of Hudson Bay and James Bay)

- › The *Nêhithawak* or Woodland Cree (inhabitants of what is now known as Alberta)
- › The *Nêhiyawak* or Plains Cree (inhabitants of what are now known as Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Montana)
- Share and read some of the treaties that involve the Cree nation, most specifically the Numbered Treaties with Canada. Provide an interdisciplinary context for some of the major players to these treaties, describe what was occurring at the time, and explain how these circumstances emerged.
- Explain and explore differences in territorial land claims that members of the Cree nation shared with other tribal nations, such as the Oji-Cree, Dakota, Lakota, Blackfoot, and the Anishinaabeg. If possible, provide some brief information on historical wars and trading networks between all of these nations and communities involving land, resources, and people.

NOTE: When reading the series, it is important to understand the historical rivalry between the Cree and the Blackfoot.

- Examine contemporary Aboriginal population data in Canada. Where are Cree peoples today? Make a list of Cree reserve communities nearest to your school and/or mark the communities on a map. Use different colours of pins to indicate Plains Cree, Woodland Cree, Swampy Cree, etc.

(ii) Historical and Contemporary Plains Cree

- Using the reference reading list at the back of this guide, provide some contextual information on Plains Cree culture and society, kinship formation and structures, the structure and arrangement of marriages, symbols (such as the dreamcatcher), warrior societies, the influence of the horse, the role of forests and waterways, recreational activities such as the hoop game, and the presence and role of stories and storytelling.
- With students, examine information about the following ceremonies in Plains Cree tradition: the vision quest, the Thirst Dance (also known as Sundance or, traditionally, Nipakwe Cimuwin), the Wake and Round dance (honouring death and bereavement), and initiation into warrior societies.
- Research the cultural and political importance of names, gifts, clothing, hair, and medicines for Plains Cree communities.
- Uncover the multiple roles animals played in cultural life, politics, and institutional structures (specifically

the bison, the bear, and the eagle). It may be useful to learn something about traditional totemic systems of governance.

- Examine gender roles in traditional Plains Cree culture and society.
- Create working definitions of Cree senses of family and community. How similar to and/or different from mainstream Canadian senses of family and community are these definitions?
- Study some of the impacts of colonialism on Plains Cree traditional culture and structures and specific Canadian government policies and procedures such as the *Indian Act*, residential schools, and the reserve system. Briefly overview some major historical events in Canada-Aboriginal history, most specifically the *British North America Act*, the formation of the provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, the near extinction of the bison, and the rise of agriculture and cities on the Canadian prairies.
- Discuss actions of Plains Cree leaders from the 19th century (such as Mistahi-maskwa, Pihtokahânapiwiyin, Ahtahkakoop, and Payipwât) and/or the present (such as John Tootoosis and Perry Bellegarde).
- Have students read materials by contemporary Plains Cree intellectuals (such as Louise Halfe, Edward Ahenakew, and Neal McLeod) and by researchers (such as Deanne Christenson and John Milloy) to understand how these cultural and societal systems continue to exist today. See references at the back of this guide for a list of works written by the above mentioned researchers. How have Plains Cree cultural and societal systems changed? Use case studies (such as the bison hunt) to illustrate these changes and examine how change influences *epistemology*, or the way a people view the world and universe.

Profile Plains Cree artists such as Allan Sapp, Maria Campbell, Michael Greyeyes, and Winston Wuttunee, and explore how cultural production continues today. What stories are being told by Plains Cree contemporary storytellers? How are these expressions reflections of both traditional and contemporary epistemologies?

(iii) Family and Community

Ask your students the following discussion questions:

- What does family mean to you? How are families formed? Who makes up your sense of family?

- What does community mean to you? How are communities formed? Who makes up your sense of community?
- Can you list all of the communities you are part of? That you will be part of in the future? That you may never be part of?
- In what ways are families like communities? In what ways are they not like communities?
- Are male communities different from female communities? If so, how?
- How does age influence the formation of communities? Are there specific youth communities and adult communities?
- What are some initiation ceremonies that indicate belonging in a family? To a community?

(iv) Health

Ask your students the following discussion questions:

- What constitutes a healthy life? Can you formulate a working definition of good health? What are the parts necessary and not necessary to having a healthy life?
- What is sickness? What types of sicknesses are there?
- Is everyone's sense of health the same? What factors come into determining if someone is living a healthy life?
- What are cures? List as many cures as possible for the types of sicknesses you have mentioned thus far.
- Are cures the same as medicine? What are the differences? The similarities? If a medicine is not a cure then what does a medicine do?
- What sicknesses cannot be cured? What do you do when an illness cannot be cured?
- What are the roles of family and community in helping one recover from sickness? Are they important? How?
- What sicknesses leave permanent reminders? What are these? What are scars? What kinds of scars are there?

(v) Canadian and Aboriginal History

Ask your students the following discussion questions:

- What do you know about Aboriginal history in Canada? Cree history? Plains Cree history?
- How much of Aboriginal history is part of Canadian history? For example, is pre-Confederation history

part of Canada's history? If yes, what parts? Why do you think this?

- When did Canada begin? How did it begin? What is the "story" of the history of Canada? Could you write this story from what you know?
- Is history influenced by epistemology (see page 8 of Teacher's Guide for definition). Is history objective?
- Are there any missing details, facts, and/or perspectives in official versions of history? Can you think of any examples? Are there some versions that are more "correct" than others? Do power, money, and resources influence and control who get to tell their versions of history and who do not?
- How would you tell the "complete" story of Canadian history? Could you?
- The introduction of smallpox was a major event in European-Aboriginal relations in Canada's history. What do you know about the disease? What are its symptoms and effects? How did the disease shape relationships between Aboriginal peoples and Europeans and the formation of Canada?

NOTE: Images of smallpox infections are striking and disconcerting. Preparation of students is likely necessary prior to reading *Scars*.

(vi) Residential Schools and their Legacies

- Discuss and explore Aboriginal leaders and their actions in advocating both for schools for their communities and education provisions in treaties. Two available case studies are Chief Shingwauk ("The Pine") and Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonabay).
- Examine the history of residential schools in Canada (this is particularly crucial for your reading of *Ends/Begins*). Excellent resources include: *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* by J. R. Miller; *No End of Grief: Indian Residential Schools in Canada* by Agnes Grant; and *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 to 1986* by John S. Milloy. The CBC Digital Archives also has an excellent video and radio clip section entitled, "A Lost Heritage: Canada's Residential Schools," available at <http://archives.cbc.ca/society/education/>.
- The following are some useful facts about residential schools:
 - › The earliest known attempt at creating "residential schools" was in 1620 by the Récollets, a French Roman Catholic missionary order. The program

- sent Native children to France for several years of education and then returned them to Canada.
- › In 1820, Sir Peregrine Maitland, then-governor of Upper Canada, proposed a model of a residential school system for Aboriginal children that would remove them from their traditional communities and lifestyles and place them in boarding schools where they would learn math, reading, writing, and agricultural skills (in his vision, turning them into future “good” Canadian settlers). The plan was never established but would be used as a model for later residential schools.
 - › The *British North America Act* of 1867 “gave” the Canadian colonial government federal responsibility over Indian affairs, essentially making all Aboriginal peoples in Canada the responsibility of the federal government (Section 91:24 of the *British North America Act*). This was further entrenched in the 1876 *Indian Act*.
 - › Over the next 129 years, the federal government, with the cooperation of four churches (Anglican, Catholic, United, and Presbyterian), created a residential school system based on the premise that Canada must “kill the Indian in the child” – assimilate Aboriginal children into Canada’s cultural, political, religious, & ideological mainstream.
 - › Scholar John Milloy marks 1879 as the “official” beginning of residential school history, though some schools began as early as 1868.
 - › Attendance was mandatory for all Aboriginal children under 16 years of age (made law in an 1894 amendment to the *Indian Act*). Compulsory attendance was heavily enforced into the 1920s (particularly by Indian agents). Authorities used a multitude of powers to force parents to enroll their children, including kidnapping, imprisonment, and withholding food, money, and resources (often guaranteed by treaty).
 - › Many Aboriginal leaders, elders, and parents wanted their children to receive an education in the “White man’s way.” In many cases, communities requested schools, and parents sent their children to these schools in the hopes that this would enable them to have a productive life in a “new” Canada. This attitude changed as time went on.
 - › Some Aboriginal leaders, elders, and parents did not want Canada to be involved with educating their children at all. They resisted any schooling.
 - › By 1900, 3,285 children were enrolled in 61 residential schools in Canada. Residential schools reached their highest point in 1931 with 80 schools.
 - › While at the schools, children were generally forbidden to speak their traditional languages. Punishments (including physical abuse) were harsh for those who continued to speak their own languages. Administrators of the schools believed that prohibiting Aboriginal language use would force students to learn English more quickly.
 - › Many students experienced wide-scale emotional, physical, and sexual abuse by teachers, nuns, and priests. In many cases, children were refused regular visitation by their parents.
 - › Native spiritual traditions were forbidden. Children were also often forcibly indoctrinated into Christian ceremonies and practices.
 - › Many children died while attending residential school. Many doctors, school inspectors, and government officials cited overcrowding, poor building conditions, poor sanitation and ventilation, inadequate food, diseases (especially tuberculosis), and unsuitable health services as major factors. Poor records were kept during this period and accurate death statistics in the schools are impossible to calculate, but some estimates are in the hundreds of thousands.
 - › When it became evident that violent acts were occurring at many schools, resistance became a daily occurrence by students, parents, and communities. For example, students would refuse to eat or work, parents would hide their children (or keep them on the farm or along the trap line), communities burned down schools. Many students attempted to escape from the schools. This was almost always met with swift, negative responses by authorities.
 - › Not all schools were the same, and not all schools partook in the above activities. Each residential school had its own policies and procedures, and the student populace sometimes influenced a school’s policies.

- › Some who attended residential schools had positive experiences. Activities such as music, art, and sports were very popular, and many former students went on to make tremendous contributions to Canada, on par with anyone else.
- › Some former students had great difficulty adjusting back into their communities after attending residential school. Others never returned home at all, settling in cities and towns. In some cases, “survivors” who experienced serious trauma brought these issues home to their families and communities, which created long-term problems that affected their everyday life. One serious impact was an inability to parent or care for children – an expected result since many never had an opportunity to witness their own parents care for them. Other legacies that can be attributed directly to residential school experiences include alcohol and substance abuse, violence, psychological problems, and cultural atrophy.
- › It is estimated that during the 100-year period between 1870 and 1970, up to one-third of all Aboriginal school-aged children boarded at residential schools.
- › The last residential school, The Gordon Residential School in Saskatchewan, closed its doors in 1996.
- Examine historical data from specific residential schools and the locations of the schools. Discuss the differences between schools, taking into consideration their specific purposes, geographies, histories, and differences. Have students (a) identify residential schools that existed in or near their communities and (b) find out information about them.
- Examine residential schools in the context of modern human rights and child protection laws and systems in Canada. Pertinent documents include *The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, the *United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child*, and provincial human rights legislation. Organizations that uphold these rights include the Canadian Human Rights Commission, Canadian Children’s Rights Council, and the various provincial child care agencies.
- Discuss the following terms, which are often used when discussing residential schools. In all cases, it is best to give a balanced understanding of the term by considering history, perspective, and context. You may find it useful to create “working definitions” that you can revisit during your reading of the 7 Generations series:

education	abuse
racism	trauma
intergenerational effects	oppression
genocide	assimilation
equality/inequality	religion
school	
- There are literally hundreds of examples of art, novels, poems, speeches, stories, and songs about the residential school experience, by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal artists. Some firsthand accounts by former students include Louise Halfé’s *Bear Bones and Feathers*, Tomson Highway’s *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, and Basil Johnston’s *Indian School Days*. A study exploring these and other works is Sam McKegney’s *Magic Weapons: Aboriginal Writers Remaking Community after Residential School*. Share some of these different perspectives. After giving some historical context, ask your students the following discussion questions:
 - › What do you know about residential schools in Canada?
 - › Who were involved with starting residential schools? What were the goals of these schools?
 - › What was the role of Indian agents in these schools? What was the role of politicians? Priests? Teachers? Clergy? Parents? Elders? Leaders?
 - › What assumptions led to the creation of residential schools? Where did these assumptions come from? How did they influence lawmakers and church leaders?
 - › What were some of the legacies of residential schools for survivors? How were their relationships affected? Their children? Their grandchildren? Their communities? How long lasting do you think these effects can be? What were some of the benefits of residential schools?

- › What issues in Aboriginal communities today can relate back to the residential school experiences? What are some of the ongoing results of these schools?
- › What is being done today to rectify some of the legacies of residential schools? What else can be done?

NOTE: It may be useful to discuss and share apologies or “statements of regret” for these schools, as made by Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Pope Benedict XVI.

- › Who do you feel was impacted the most by residential schools? Why do you think this? Where can you see effects today in your community? In your city? In your province? In Canada?
- › Why are residential schools a significant and relevant part of Canadian history?

NOTE: Some students, particularly those who have been directly impacted by the legacies of residential schools, may find discussions of the schools extremely uncomfortable and traumatizing. Sensitivity is crucial. In some cases, counselling services should be made aware of the discussions and be available when needed.

(vii) Personal History

Ask your students the following discussion questions:

- How does the past influence the present?
- How do we know about the past? What role does “story” play in “history”?
- How is your personal history influenced by epistemology? Is it? Is personal history objective?
- What are some examples of how the past has influenced and affected you?

(viii) Cultural Narratives – Myths and Legends

Ask your students the following discussion questions:

- What is a myth? A legend? Are they the same?
- How are myths and legends sacred? How do they shape perspective and epistemology (the way one views the world)?
- How are myths and legends constructed? Who creates them?
- How do these sorts of stories explain the world? What parts do they usually explain? What are some elements of these stories (for instance, what kind of characters do they have)? When do they take place? What are the structures of these types of stories?

- What are some elements in these stories that make them different from or similar to scientific explanations? What are the purposes behind these often-different versions of “history”?
- Are there any mythic or legend narratives shared between cultures? How similar are they? How different are they (For instance, many Aboriginal cultures have sacred flood stories that can be discussed in relation to Biblical ones. Or, some cultures tell stories about spirits “giving birth” to humans while others tell of them being made from mud and water.) Discuss the implications of the sameness or difference between the narratives from different cultures.

(ix) Personal Relationships

Ask your students the following discussion questions:

- Have you ever made a promise to someone? What was it? How seriously did you take this promise and why? How long can people hold promises?
- Have you ever had a disagreement with someone? What was it about? How long did you disagree? What rectified the issue?
- What are “grudges,” and why do people carry them?
- Are disagreements with family members more difficult to deal with than disagreements with friends? Why or why not?
- What are the ways in which a conflict can be mediated? Does it sometimes help to have an “outside” person help solve a conflict? How?
- What are some conflicts that occur between young people and their parent(s) or grandparent(s)? How do these conflicts get resolved? Are there any times when these conflicts cannot be resolved?

Suggested Activities

Anticipation Guide

An anticipation guide is a list of statements with which the students are asked to agree or disagree. The statements are related to concepts, issues, or attitudes presented in the reading selection. Typically, three to five statements are used in an anticipation guide, and an effort is made to use statements that will result in differences of opinion and, thus, lead to discussion and debate. See page 17 for anticipation guides for *Stone* and *Scars*. See page 18 for anticipation guides for *Ends/Begins* and *The Pact*.

For example:

Have students respond to the statements *before* and *after* reading the graphic novel *Stone*, *Scars*, or *End/Begins*. Then ask: Do your opinions change after reading the novel? Reflect on why or why not your opinions do or do not change.

Poetry Connection

Select a poem or song of your choice that depicts some aspect of family and/or community: descriptions of family/community, what influences and affects it, and/or how it is important to identity, culture, or health. Read your selection aloud to the class, and have students (alone, with a partner, or in a small group) respond with an artistic representation of the mood, tone, and/or emotions in the poem or song. Invite students to find and share their own poems and/or song lyrics that help them make connections to the topic you have chosen. *Native Poetry in Canada: A Contemporary Anthology* (edited by Jeannette Armstrong) and the website Poem Hunter (poemhunter.com) are possible sources for appropriate poetry.

Guest Speaker

Invite a Plains Cree leader, role model, or elder to the classroom. Ask your guest to speak on an aspect of his or her culture as it relates to family, community, health, or history. Students can prepare questions ahead of time. If some students are uncomfortable asking personal questions, invite them to submit their questions to the speaker anonymously ahead of time (with the guest having the option to respond or not).

Remembering

Have students recall a time or event that affected them personally. Instruct students to choose an item that represents that time or moment and bring it to class. This activity can also be done during a nature walk or trip around the schoolyard. In the classroom, have students sit in a circle, and set out a large blanket in the centre of the circle. Have all students place their symbols on the blanket. Then, following the Talking Circle technique, in turn, have each student explain the significance of his or her object. This activity may be an emotional experience for some students, so take appropriate precautions and/or ask students to refrain from stories that are too personal. Provide support where needed. After the activity, have students speak about their experiences – their feelings about hearing others' stories, what surprised them, how

they reacted, etc. Point out the emotional importance people place on objects and the significance of objects in history and to character.

Internet and Media First Nations Stereotypes Project

Go to the Blue Corn Comics website (www.bluecorncomics.com), and click on “The Harm of Native Stereotyping” link. There, you will find hundreds of pages of reading material on First Nations stereotypes. Draw students' attention to the article titled, “The Basic Indian Stereotypes,” by Joseph Riverwind (www.bluecorncomics.com/stbasics.htm) and the representations he describes. Have students examine where these images can be found and the implications of such images for First Nations peoples. Have students prepare oral or written presentations on how these images are found in visual media such as film, comic books, graphic novels, and/or television. Ask: What are the implications of these representations in Canadian society, if any? What if these representations were of another culture? What roles do power, politics, and history play in the continued use of these images?

Myth and Legend Activity

Collect a sample of First Nations myths and legends and read them in class. Discuss some of the similar features of these stories (characters, plot, structure, time, geography, etc.), and examine them for how they construct world-views and epistemologies. Compare them to legends and myths from other cultures found in Canada, and to stories in books such as those from the Bible, the Qur'an, or from other religions. Note that in some cases indigenous communities are able to reconcile both within local cultures and communities. Ask students (as a whole class or in small discussion groups):

- What kinds of similar stories are there in Canadian culture?
- How do these stories contradict or confirm one another?
- Are myths and legends still being created?

Residential School Activity

Show students the following two photographs.



(photograph credit: Saskatchewan Archives Board R-A8223-1 and R-A8223-2 and Library and Archives Canada, C-022474)

Published originally in a 1904 annual report by the Department of Indian Affairs, these “before and after tuition” (enrollment) photographs are of a young Cree child named Thomas Moore, who attended the Regina Indian Industrial School (entering in 1897).

Have students examine the photos and give their first impressions. Ask them to compare the differences in the boy’s age, his clothing, shoes, accessories, hair, facial expressions, background items in the picture, body stance, and any other details they notice.

In *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 to 1986*, author John Milloy (1999, 3–6) writes of the photographs:

The images are a cogent expression of what [Canadian] federal policy had been since Confederation and what it would remain for many decades. It was a policy of assimilation, a policy designed to move Aboriginal communities from their “savage” state to that of “civilization” and thus make in Canada but one community – a non-Aboriginal one...

The pictures are... images of what became in this period the primary object of [residential school] policy: the Aboriginal child, and an analogy of the relationship between the two cultures – Aboriginal and White – as it had been in the past and as it was to be in the future. There, in the photograph on the left, is the young Thomas posed against a fur robe, in his beaded dress, his hair in long braids, clutching a gun.

Displayed for the viewer are the symbols of the past – of Aboriginal costume and culture, of hunting, of the disorder and violence of warfare and of the cross-cultural partnerships of the fur trade and of the military alliances that had dominated life in Canada since the late sixteenth century.

Those partnerships, anchored in Aboriginal knowledge and skills, had enabled the newcomers to find their way, to survive, and to prosper. But they were now merely historic; they were not to be any part of the future as Canadians pictured at the founding of their new nation in 1867. That future was one of settlement, agriculture, manufacturing, lawfulness, and Christianity. In the view of politicians and civil servants in Ottawa whose gaze was fixed upon the horizon of national development, Aboriginal knowledge and skills were neither necessary nor desirable in a land that was to be dominated by European industry and, therefore, by Europeans and their culture.

That future was inscribed in the photograph on the right. Thomas, with his hair carefully barbered, in his plain, humble suit, stands confidently, hand on hip, in a new context. Here he is framed by the horizontal and vertical lines of wall and pedestal – the geometry of social and economic order; of place and class, and of private property the foundation of industriousness, the cardinal virtue of late-Victorian culture. But most telling of all, perhaps, is the potted plant. Elevated above him, it is the symbol of civilized life, of agriculture. Like Thomas, the plant is cultivated nature no longer wild. Like it, Thomas has been, the Department suggests, reduced to civility in the time he has lived within the confines of the Regina Industrial School.

Ask students the following discussion questions:

- How do you think such a drastic change in Thomas Moore’s appearance took place?
- What are some of the many examples of Canadian history evident in the photographs? (Use Milloy’s words as a guide for your instruction, if you want.)
- How do you think Aboriginal students felt about the changes they had to make to their appearance? Why do you think they would feel that way?
- Why do you think many teachers and administrators working at residential schools made Aboriginal students change their appearance so drastically?
- How would you feel if someone made you change your appearance that much?
- Do schools today have rules regarding appearance and clothing? Why do you think these kinds of policies are in place?

Philosophies of Writing Activity (senior level recommended)

Share with your students the following two excerpts:

1. From *Book of the Fourth World: Reading the Native Americas Through Their Literature* by Gordon Brotherston (1992, 4):

The concept of the Fourth World text and literature in general has been especially fragmented as a result of having imposed upon it imported notions of literary medium. For a start, jejune Western pronouncements on what does and does not constitute script, and the categorical binary that separates oral from written, have proved especially inept when applied to the wealth of literary media in native America: for instance, the scrolls of the Algonkin, the knotted strings (quipus) of the Inca, Navajo dry paintings, and an encyclopedic pages of Mesoamerica's screenfold books. Whole modes of representation have as a result been simply ignored, along with the configuring of space and time whose reason is assumed in the placement and enumeration of every native detail. For using these languages, visual and verbal, the text in this sense may construct the world as it constructs itself, so that its self-definition or ontology corroborates political self-determination. Though technical, these grammatological questions carry a heavy ideological charge, have stifled in their way the voice of the Fourth World, and need therefore to be clarified right from the start.

2. From *Recollections of an Assiniboine Chief* by Dan (Ochankuhage) Kennedy (1972, 48):

We youngsters were playing tag nearby when someone called me. I stood still and hesitated to approach my elders until my grandfather, Panapin, called me by name.

As I stood before them, one of the elders pointed to the tattoo I had on my left cheek beneath the eye and said to my grandfather:

"Panapin, mark that tattoo on your grandson's cheek. You are fortunate indeed to have that mark of identification on your grandson's face. One of the redcoats at Fort Walsh told me that when the westward migration of the whitemen begins in earnest, they will come in swarms like the grasshoppers in flight. They will occupy all of our buffalo country and will build centers like the anthills. When these things have come to pass the Redcoats told me that we would not be able to identify our own people!

"And furthermore," he continued, "our children and grandchildren will be taught the magic art of writing. Just think for a moment what that means. Without the aid of a spoken word our children will transmit their thoughts on a piece of paper, and that talking paper may be carried to distant parts of the country and convey your thoughts to your friends. Why even the medicine men of our tribe cannot perform such miracles."

While some of the language in the quotes may be academic (be prepared with definitions), you will find this activity very educational and will lead to many interesting discussions.

Ask students the following discussion questions:

- What is "writing"? What makes something a piece of "writing"? What is "magic" about writing? Is all writing "literature"? What makes something a piece of "literature"?
- What are 10 examples of writing around you right now? What parts are similar in all of them (for example, they all use alphabetical writing, convey information, demonstrate speech).
- As Kennedy describes in his book, often the first time Aboriginal peoples witnessed and learned "the magic art of writing" was at residential school. What kind of writing?
- In his book, Brotherston says that there is a "binary" that separates the "oral from written." What might be the differences between the two? Why do you think Aboriginal cultures are classified as "oral" cultures? Do you agree? Who portrays them as oral cultures?
- What is an "oral" culture? What is a "written" culture? Can you think of some examples of each? Are they always different? Can a culture be both? How?
- What are the roles of the audience in an "oral" culture and in a "written" culture? What is the difference between an audience that "listens to" a story and an audience that "views or reads" a story? How is participation the same? How is participation different? In each instance, what must an audience do, and how does this role change when an oral culture begins to use forms of writing? Does it change?
- Can only humans write – or create writing that "matters" (entities such as animals, plants, spirits, and other forms)? Why? Is writing evidence of civilization? "Advanced" thinking? Intellectualism? What can writing do that no other forms of expression can do?

- What are some examples of Aboriginal writing systems?

NOTE: You may want to refer to Brotherston and Kennedy. Brotherston writes, “the scrolls of the Algonkin, the knotted strings (quipus) of the Inca, Navajo dry paintings, and an encyclopedic pages of Mesoamerica’s screenfold books.” Kennedy says, “that tattoo on your grandson’s cheek.”

- Is alphabetic or syllabic expression better and/or more representational of language and meaning than graphic and pictographic writing? What can each do? What do they share? What makes them different? Do you agree with Brotherston’s argument that Aboriginal expressive systems – which often incorporate oral and written elements – is “writing” and “literature”?
- Is Canadian culture an “oral” culture or a “written” culture? Is it both? Share the following excerpt with students from *If This Is Your Land, Where Are Your Stories?: Finding Common Ground* by J. Edward Chamberlin (2004, 19–20):

All so-called oral cultures are rich in forms of writing, albeit non-syllabic and non-alphabetic ones: woven and beaded belts and blankets, knotted and coloured strings, carved and painted trays, poles, doors, verandah posts, canes and sticks, masks, hats and chests play a central role in the cultural life of these communities, functioning in all the ways written texts do for European societies. And, on the other hand, the central institutions of our supposedly “written” cultures – our courts and churches and parliaments and schools – are in fact arenas of strictly defined and highly formalized oral traditions, in which certain things must be said and done in the right order by the right people on the right occasions with the right people present. We are, all of us, much more involved in both oral and written traditions than we might think. And our stories and songs draw on the resources of both.

Have students create a “running” list (there are literally dozens) of all of the examples of Aboriginal writing systems they see throughout the 7 Generations series. As each instance emerges, talk about what this piece of writing demonstrates about history, art, spirituality, and expression. Remember to talk about both the author and the illustrator of 7 Generations. Where does a graphic novel fit? Is it “oral” or “written”?

Supplemental and Supporting Online Materials and Lesson Plans for Activating

- Defining Culture
<http://www.connectingcultures-education.co.uk/UserFiles/File/defining-culture.pdf>
- History and Culture Through Food
<http://www.microsoft.com/education/food.mspix>
- Culture in the Cupboard
<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/lessons/10/g68/culture.html>
- Everyday Manners and Customs in the United States
<http://www.englishadvantage.info/esl/everyday-manners-and-customs-in-the-united-states>
- Canadian Culture: A Category?
<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/archives/canadian-culture-a-category/article801204>

Anticipation Guide: *Stone*

Before Reading	Statement	After Reading	Reflection
	1. Aboriginal culture is important for Aboriginal peoples.		
	2. Aboriginal culture and society is “authentic” when it is the same as it was 200 years ago.		
	3. Aboriginal history is important for all Canadians to know.		
	4. Senses of family and community are the same for all peoples.		
	5. Learning history helps us understand and live in the present.		

Anticipation Guide: *Scars*

Before Reading	Statement	After Reading	Reflection
	1. Aboriginal culture is important for Aboriginal peoples.		
	2. Aboriginal culture and society is “authentic” when it is the same as it was 200 years ago.		
	3. Aboriginal history is important for all Canadians to know.		
	4. Senses of family, community, and health are the same for all peoples.		
	5. Storytelling is a way in which history is best understood.		

Anticipation Guide: *End/Begins*

Before Reading	Statement	After Reading	Reflection
	1. The residential school system supported Aboriginal peoples in their integration with Canada.		
	2. Aboriginal peoples are primarily responsible for the social problems they are currently experiencing.		
	3. Family is the most important part of an individual's identity and culture.		
	4. Storytelling brings families together.		
	5. Violence is a learned behaviour.		

Anticipation Guide: *The Pact*

Before Reading	Statement	After Reading	Reflection
	1. Aboriginal problems are Canadian problems.		
	2. Understanding history is the most important way a family/community/nation grows.		
	3. Aboriginal families have problems unique only to Aboriginal peoples.		
	4. The land is an important part of a relationship.		
	5. To heal, one must learn to forget about one's problems.		

Four-Quadrant Reading Response

<p>Visual (draw or describe specific character, setting, or event)</p>	<p>Language (record important or interesting words or phrases)</p>
<p>Emotional (write about feelings)</p>	<p>Questions (record questions or “I wonder” statements)</p>

2. Acquiring (during reading)

It is important for students to make personal connections as they read and to use specific strategies that will help them gain information from the text. Coding the text, double-entry journals, and literature circles are tools that can be used to support students’ understanding of the text and their learning about the important themes in the text.

- *Sticky notes.* Students can use sticky notes to make annotations as they read (code) the text. Examples of annotations include:
√ This sounds familiar...
! Wow, that’s incredible...
? I’m curious about...
- *Double-entry journals* encourage students to not only analyze texts but also to make text-to-self connections, text-to-text connections, and text-to-world connections. Explain to students that, in the first column, they record a quote or situation from the text that they can react to. In the second column, they record their reaction. Reinforce the fact that in their

reactions, they are to make a connection between the text and themselves, the text and another text, or the text and the world. See more information on Connection Prompts (see page 19).

- *Four-Quadrant Reading Response* (adapted from: Brownlie and Close 1992) is a comprehension strategy where students read the novel and make comments, notes, or drawings in each of the quadrant areas of the response chart (see below).
- *Literature Circles* allows students to work in small groups to construct meaning and expand their comprehension of texts.
- *Literature Circles* provides a discussion format that encourages both students’ personal interaction with the text and consideration of the perspectives of others. The Talking Circle, as described on page 6, provides a similar context for exploring diverse perspectives in a respectful and thoughtful manner.

Connection Prompts

1. **Text to Self: connecting with the text through personal experience, thoughts, and feelings.**

Ask your students the following questions:

- What experiences have you had that are similar to any of the characters' experiences?
- What do you think is the main message of this book/story?
- What are some connections you may have to the text or to the main message of the text?
- Is this message important? Why? To whom?
- What are your thoughts or feelings about this message?

2. Text to Text: connecting the main message with another text.

Ask your students the following questions:

- Have you read another story or text with a similar message? How was the message the same? How was it different?

3. Text to World: refining thinking through sharing viewpoints, understanding the viewpoints of others, refining perspectives and extending understanding, and taking a stance to make the world a better place.

Ask your students the following questions:

- What are some of the viewpoints or perspectives of others to the main message? In what ways are the viewpoints the same? In what ways are the viewpoints different from each other?
- Are you familiar with an event that has happened in another community, or another part of the world, in which people share a similar message? Is there an event in the world, or in our community, in which people could benefit from hearing this message?
- What might you do that could make the world a better place because of this message?

Book 1: *Stone*

Reading and Responding

Short descriptions of sections of the graphic novel appear here. Questions for discussion follow each description.

Cover

Examine the cover – the only colour image in the graphic novel. Notice some seemingly connected and similar images, such as the pills/stars, water/spirit, eagle/stone pendulum and the similarity in stature and placement of hands of the two men at the forefront. Notice other parts, such as the detailed font, some of the evident uses

of certain numbers (such as four lines of scars on Bear's chest), and certain colours (such as red).

Discussion questions:

- Why might all characters be looking to the right and the eagle to the left? Why is the arrow pointing to the left?
- What might the style and shape of the hair of the two characters say about them and the state of mind each is in?
- What/who/where is Stone? What are some of the many uses of Stone that are evident in this scene?
- What could the presence of weapons in this scene mean?
- What might be a central message as intended by the author? Considering such factors as his biography and what you know about Plains Cree or Aboriginal traditions and cultures, what do you think might be a purpose in writing this story?

Pages 1–5

The story opens with a shattered photograph of a man. Then, we see a woman in a car making a call on her cell phone. It is raining, and there is much traffic. In the panels that follow, we read the words from a note written to someone's mother. We then see the woman running into a house. There, she finds her son strewn out on his bed with vomit around his mouth and pills all over the floor. In the panel above are words from the young man's note, describing a dream "...where I was walking in the woods until there were trees everywhere, towering over me, and I was lost. I realize now that I'll never wake from that dream. I don't want to be lost anymore or waiting for somebody to find me." The young man, named Edwin, has attempted suicide. Edwin is taken away in an ambulance to the hospital, and in the final panel on page 3, a stoic doctor walks toward Edwin's distraught mother to report on her son's condition.

Edwin wakes up in a hospital bed with his mother looking over him. She tells him that she found his note, and he has "...so much to live for." She also explains to him, "Our past has shaped us all," but Edwin turns away from her and says, "The past isn't an excuse." Edwin's mother decides it is time to tell Edwin a story of where he came from.

Discussion questions:

- What is the significance of the graphic novel being in black and white instead of in colour? How does it influence your reading?
- Look closely at the stone that Edwin's mother is wearing around her neck. Is it the same stone as the one on the cover? What might that mean if it is the same?
- If Edwin is depressed because "the phone never rings," why do you think his mother is phoning him on this day?
- Notice the similar web pattern on Edwin's broken photo frame on page 1 and the large picture panel on page 2. Notice, as well, that the photo frame has seemingly been repaired on page 2. What might this mean? Do you think there are any connections with these two web patterns and the dreamcatcher seen in Edwin's room? What might this mean?
- Look closely at Edwin's room on page 2. What do you know about him? What clues lead you to see him in a particular way? What does he like? What was he likely doing before getting sick on the floor?
- Have you ever felt lost? If so, what did it feel like? What circumstances led you to feel this way?
- Are any contemporary stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples introduced or perhaps reinforced in this section? What might those be, and where do you see them?
- Edwin might be easily thought of as the stereotype of the "drunk Indian" (see Riverwind's article at Blue Corn Comics). How is the author using this stereotype, and in what ways do you think he may be upending it in the story that follows? What might be some differences between those representations and this one, if any? Does Edwin's note (adding context, perspective, opinion, complexity) change this stereotype in any way?
- What might happen if a person did not know his or her own history? What is valuable about knowing one's history? What is perhaps not so valuable?
- Notice how the caption box on page 5 is similar to the caption boxes for Edwin's letter to his mother. What might this mean?

Pages 6–10

Edwin's mother begins to tell her son a story about Stone and his brother Bear, two Plains Cree living in a village at the beginning of the 19th century. When Bear returns from a warrior ride, Stone lets Bear know that he wishes to join the warriors. Bear reminds him of his youth and inexperience. Before he becomes a warrior, Stone will have to be initiated into the warrior society. He must go on a vision quest (seek a vision about his life and future) and fast (not eat or drink) for four days. Bear also tells Stone that he will find items after he has his vision that will remind him of his quest; he is to keep those items. Stone then leaves on his vision quest. He enters a quiet space in the forest, where he prays to the Creator for guidance and delivery. On the third day of his quest, he receives his vision in a stunning array of images, which discomfort him and provoke him to run away. While running, Stone stumbles, and he finds a stone in the shape of the eagle he saw in his vision. He picks up the stone, and when he returns to his community, an elder tells him, "There are no accidents, Stone." The elder makes the stone into an amulet, which Stone wears around his neck. Stone is told that his vision was of his past, present, and future – his "destiny."

Discussion questions:

- Bear returns from a ride with other warriors. Where do you think they are coming from? Notice the bear on his regalia. What do bears do, and what might humans learn from them? According to some of the reading references at the back of this guide, what might the bear represent in Plains Cree culture?
- A woman leads Bear's horse away. What were some gender roles in Plains Cree culture? Would we think of any of these as problematic today? Why?
- Notice the images of smoke that permeate throughout page 7. How does this influence your reading of Stone's entry into his vision quest? How do the images of smoke provoke particular emotions or ideas in you as a reader?
- Stone walks into the forest and is surrounded by birch trees. What were birch trees used for in Plains Cree tradition? What were birch trees used for in other Aboriginal cultures? How might birch bark "bitings" or "writings" compare to the form of the graphic novel?
- Stone has his vision on the evening of the third day (perhaps the morning of the fourth day) of his fast.

How might you feel after not eating or drinking for three days? How does the lack of food and water contribute to visions?

- Look closely at Stone's vision on page 9. Who do you see? If Stone's vision represents his past, present, and future, what image(s) denote(s) each? (Note that there are four distinct images he sees.)
- Why does Stone run? Have you already seen the stone that he picks up?

Pages 10–14

Days after Stone's vision quest, a meeting is held between members of his family and family members of his childhood friend and love, Nahoway. Nahoway brings a gift of moccasins for Stone, and her mother brings tea. At this meeting, it is determined that Stone and Nahoway will marry, and Nahoway places her gift of moccasins on his feet. The bond between the two families is thus assured and strengthened.

Soon after, another camp settles near the Plains Cree village. The men from the two encampments meet on the prairie to test each other's skills. The first game they play is the hoop game, a test of accuracy with a bow and arrow, which Stone wins (and seemingly *always* wins). The second game is a test to find out who can remain on his horse while running toward the edge of a cliff. Bear wins the race, but is thrown from his horse and over the edge of the cliff. As Bear clings to the cliff's edge, Stone reaches out and saves his brother, and Bear commends Stone on his bravery. Bear then makes Stone promise that he will take part in the Thirst Dance, the final requirement for him to become a brave. Stone promises.

During the night, Bear leaves Stone sleeping and sets out with other warriors to seek out the Blackfoot, the traditional enemy of the Plains Cree.

Discussion questions:

- Although *Stone*, the story, has been translated into English from Cree (see page 6), the author decided to use Nahoway's Cree name instead of using its English translation, "Distant Song." As a reader, what is your experience of reading words that have been translated from a different language? Why do you think the author has chosen not to translate Nahoway's name but translates Bear and Stone's names into English?
- Gift-giving seems to be an important aspect of the meeting between the two families. What does gift-giving mean in Plains Cree culture? How would you feel if your family was involved in your decision to

get married? What would be the benefits or problems with this? Why do you think this marriage will strengthen the bond between the two families?

- What might it mean symbolically, emotionally, and physically to make shoes for someone and put them on that person's feet?
- Throughout time, men have been meeting in competition. What are some examples of this today? What do these tests of skill mean for men? For their communities?
- How might Bear falling off the cliff and Stone staying on the cliff and helping his brother foreshadow the events of the next page (Bear's departure)?

Pages 14–17

When Stone wakes up in the morning, he is alone. The story then returns to modern day. Edwin is sleeping in his hospital bed with his mother watching over him. She decides to take a break and goes for a walk along a crowded hospital corridor.

Edwin wakes up, alone. He is disappointed and frustrated that he is still alive and all alone. As he gets up from his bed, he finds he is still weak and in emotional pain. His mother comes back from her walk, returns Edwin to bed, and tells him it is not his time. She reminds him that his pain is evidence that he's alive.

The reader is brought back to the 19th century. Bear has been killed by the Blackfoot, and his body is returned to Stone and his family. Stone is enraged.

Discussion questions:

- Pages 14–15 and 16–17 contain examples of a literary technique called *juxtaposition* (items or events are placed close together or side by side for comparison or contrast). This technique can help the reader better understand both sides of a story. The author uses the story of Bear and Stone to shed light on Edwin's life (and arguably vice versa) through direct similarity (pages 14–15) and indirect similarity (16–17). Closely read both sets of pages. Through juxtaposition, what does the author intend you to directly compare and learn about these two stories? How are these two stories the same, and how are they different? For instance, how do we understand Edwin's mother if she acts in a role similar to Bear, and vice versa?
- Through juxtaposition, you are being asked to see Stone's story as an *allegory* of Edwin's life. An allegory is a metaphor, symbol, or narrative that represents

“reality” and often sheds light on aspects of morality, character, politics, and religion. How do the events of Stone’s growth in the graphic novel thus far tell the story of Edwin’s life?

- Look closely at Edwin lying in his hospital bed and of the woman holding Bear’s body. Notice such things as their similarities and differences, and the fact that they are facing opposite directions (while one is alive and the other is dead). What might this say about their current states of being and their futures?
- What do you think Stone will do? What do you think Edwin will do? Have you ever faced something you thought was impossible to overcome? What did you do to tackle this problem? What are Stone and Edwin’s options?
- Pain is something both Stone and Edwin are experiencing. How is their pain the same? How is it different? Is pain something that “reminds you” you are alive? How?

Pages 18–21

Continuing her story of Stone, Edwin’s mother explains that Stone travelled to The Calling River, the place where “the Plains Cree believed their loved ones could be heard from the hunting grounds. The river’s sounds and the valley’s echoes were their voices...” While there, Stone is visited by the spirit of Bear. Bear tells Stone not to be angry but to understand: “Life is fluid like the river.... We are part of the circle.” Bear tells Stone that the time will come to seek revenge for his death. First, however, Stone must find patience in order to grow. Bear also reminds Stone of his promise to participate in the Thirst Dance. Stone returns home to his wife Nahoway, and they fall asleep, peacefully together in their home.

Back at the hospital, Edwin asks his mother why Stone does not simply go and kill the Blackfoot warrior who killed Bear. He says, “I thought we used to be savages. He should’ve scalped them and tore them apart.” Edwin’s mother disagrees. “We were never savages,” she says. “Back then family was important, community.” While revenge for damaging these things is a “right,” the responsible choice of how to take revenge is now part of Stone’s fate. She reminds Edwin that, like Stone, he will have to make choices that will determine his future.

Discussion questions:

- Where do you think spirits live? Are there any examples of spiritual places in your community

and/or territory? Why do people say that spirits “live” in certain places?

- How is prayer like reflection on someone’s life? How do we “see” people (dead or otherwise) when we reflect on them? Go back to pages 14–15 and 16–17: How are these pages reflections of each other?
- People often state that they can “see ghosts.” There are even television programs and movies on this topic. Why do you think people have a need to communicate with spiritual entities? What do they often want to say or hear?
- Are there any places where your ancestors’ spirits live? For instance, people often equate memories and places. Do you think memory and place are tied to spirituality? When people pray and/or reflect, what might they be thinking of? Does it matter where people are when they pray and/or reflect? Why or why not?
- Research bereavement ceremonies among the Plains Cree. What is “the journey,” and what does this mean? What are the implications and/or reasons of returning to the earth as a spirit for someone who is on the “journey”?
- Reflect back on Stone’s vision quest and when he picks up the eagle stone. After seeing the vision of Bear he does not take anything – or does he?
- Who is Stone’s family now, and what is the significance of Stone leaving Bear’s spirit and living with Nahoway? Examine the final panel on page 21 – a solitary teepee on the prairie. How is family and community identified now, and how might this relate with Edwin’s situation?
- How many different types of family and community do you have in your classroom? What factors lead to these changes? Do they happen slowly? Quickly?

Pages 22–24

Stone leads a group of warriors on a bison hunt. He is given the role of the Poundmaker, the most prestigious and dangerous position in any community. Dressed in an untanned hide, he lures the bison into a pound built of mud, rock, and trees. There, warriors wait on top and shoot the animals when they are trapped. After the hunt, an elder warrior comes up to Stone and pronounces, “You are ready.” Preparations begin for the Thirst Dance.

Back to modern day, Edwin is becoming impatient and wants to leave the hospital. His mother tells him that she

and his doctors will not let him leave until they are sure he will be okay. She tries to get Edwin to talk about what happened. He refuses and, instead, tells her, “Just finish the story.”

Discussion questions:

- Read the article “The Buffalo Hunt of the Plains Cree” written by Cree storyteller Joy Asham and available at: <www.wildernessnorth.com/pdf/Asham-Buffalo-Hunt.pdf>. How does Stone’s inheritance of this role mark his “readiness” for the Thirst Dance?
- How important is the bison hunt to men’s initiations into warrior societies? What would happen to these roles if there were no longer any bison to hunt?
- What are some contemporary tasks that both young men and women do to demonstrate they are ready to be a man or woman? How important are ceremonies or tasks in the formation of family and community?
- Is Edwin listening to the story and its lessons? What might he be missing? Could Edwin be a Poundmaker someday? How? Is he ready?

Pages 25–26

Two months later, Stone enters the Thirst Dance ceremony and, in preparation, dances for days without water or food. He then participates in the “Making of a Brave” ceremony, vowing to undergo trials on his body and mind as an offering to the Great Spirit. In the final offering, an elder pierces a small piece of Stone’s skin. Stone then dances around a pole in the centre of the lodge until the skewers tear away from him. He successfully completes the ceremony and enters the warrior society of his community.

Discussion questions:

- Stone has fulfilled his promise to Bear. Is this section the climax of Stone’s story?
- The Thirst Dance (*Nipakwe Cimuwin*) is similar to ceremonies practised by a host of tribal nations on the prairie. What are these other nations, and what are some of the similarities and differences?
- The Thirst Dance is often called the Sundance, a misnomer. It is actually an amalgamation of several different intellectual systems of many nations. Are there examples of ceremonies practised today that have origins from people of many different religions and backgrounds?
- An offering of flesh and blood is one way someone can demonstrate his or her commitment and belief in

a way of life. Why is it seemingly so violent? What are some other ways of demonstrating a commitment to a way of life?

- During the Thirst Dance, an eagle appears, for the third time in the story (also see cover, page 9). What are the similarities each time it appears? Why is the eagle’s mouth open sometimes and closed at other times?
- Are there examples of the Thirst Dance being performed today? Where? How has the ceremony changed from previous years? How has it remained the same?

Pages 27–30

Stone, now a member of the warrior society, finds the killer of his brother Bear. Lucky Day is the name of the man who killed Bear. After killing the members of the Blackfoot party, he kills Lucky Day and redeems his brother. Returning to his community, he is received by Nahoway, who is pregnant. In the final panels, Stone is seen visiting The Calling River and Bear’s spirit. The final scene from the past is of Stone, playing with and showing his eagle amulet to his baby.

Completing the story, Edwin’s mother explains that she told Edwin the story of Stone to show him that everyone has someone worth continuing life for, “...and this gives us hope. Drives us. Even when sometimes it’s hard to keep going.” She is, she says, fighting for him, too.

She tells Edwin that she found a poem underneath his bed, and she now understands why he tried to commit suicide. She reads the note to him. The final scenes are of Edwin crying, sweating, and contemplating suicide again, before finally closing the medicine cabinet and staring at himself in the mirror.

Discussion questions:

- Stone decides to kill Lucky Day. Is this adequate revenge for Bear’s death? What values of family and community would Stone have that would make this act acceptable? What values does our society (or societies) have today that makes revenge killing unacceptable?
- The name Lucky Day is an example of *irony*, the use of words or names to convey the exact opposite of the action. What other examples of irony can you find in the graphic novel?
- Stone has an eagle on his tepee, in much the same way that Bear had a bear representation on his horse on

page 6. Although rarely mentioned in the text, what do these two totemic and animal symbols mean, and how do they shed light on the story?

- Nahoway and the nameless woman who takes care of the horses are the predominant female characters in Stone's story. How might we compare these characters to Edwin's mother? What roles do they perform? How do you feel about the female representations in this book?
- Stone has several body markings – like Bear – presumably from the Thirst Dance. What is the significance of markings on your body, such as face painting, tattoos, and scars? What do they remind you of? Do we see evidence of this tradition around today among Plains Cree peoples? Among peoples from other traditions? How are body markings important to community and family?
- This is the final time we see Stone and his eagle amulet. Why do you think we see Edwin's mother wearing an amulet that looks exactly the same?
- Look at the final page of the graphic novel. Is it a flashback, or does it occur after Edwin is out of rehab? How does the story change if it is a flashback? If it is after Edwin leaves rehab?
- Who do you think wrote the poem that Edwin's mother finds beneath Edwin's bed? What does the poem mean? What happened "yesterday"?

3. APPLYING (after reading)

Reflection and Discussion Prompts

- What surprised you about this story? What did not?
- What questions do you still have about this story? What is "to be continued"?
- What research could you do to learn more about the following issues that are raised in the story:
 - › Plains Cree culture
 - › Canadian, Aboriginal, and your own history
 - › Health and suicide
 - › Senses of family and community
- Pick one section that you think is the most important or interesting in the graphic novel. Explain in one paragraph why you picked this particular section.

- What is the most evident message the author and illustrator wish to convey to you? What is the most important message?
- How does this message influence your thoughts on any of the above-mentioned themes?
- Did you view any stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples in this story? How were they the same as or different from popular representations of stereotypes in the media? How did the author and illustrator engage with these stereotypes to get you to think about them in different ways?

Class Activities

Taking Alternate Perspectives

- Have students write the story of Stone from a female point of view – either from Nahoway's or from the nameless horse woman's. Have her express her thoughts and feelings.
- Have Edwin's mother write an entry in her diary that explains why she is telling the story of Stone to Edwin. Have her express her thoughts and feelings about the story of Stone, how/when she heard it, and what she understands from it.

Responding to the Genre

- How do the artist's style and choice of font and illustrations influence and/or communicate the story and mood of the graphic novel? How might different choices in these areas change the book? How do illustrations add to or detract from the story?
- With a group, select an important event from the novel, and present it as a tableau. (Tableaux are created by groups of individuals posing to represent a frozen picture based on an idea, theme, or key moment in a story.) The rest of the class can guess which event is being portrayed and discuss its importance in relation to the story. Try to condense the story into the seven most important scenes.

Historical and Cultural Responses

Using Edwin's mother's story as a guide, students will write their own historical "story." Have each student bring in three or four photographs of ancestors from different time periods. Have on hand a selection of dated photographs from different time periods for students who forget to bring in photographs or who do not have any

to bring to the classroom. In preparation for this activity, ask students to pose questions to their family members about the people and time periods in the photographs. In an oral or written presentation, have students answer the following questions:

- Who were my ancestors' family and community? Were they different from mine today?
- What kinds of things did my ancestors enjoy? Dislike? How are these similar to or different from the kinds of things I enjoy or dislike today?
- What were any obstacles my ancestors faced? How were these different from or similar to ones I face?
- What things from the past do I wish still existed today? What things from the past am I glad are different?
- Of all the things in my family's past, what has changed most drastically over the years? What caused these drastic changes? Could these changes have been avoided?
- Does learning about my history help me learn about myself?

Optional: Assignment can be completed through a new media documentary or film narrative.

Learning Through Inquiry

As a class, discuss the main messages of the graphic novel, highlight key concepts, and have students think of five to ten higher-level questions that emerge from their responses to the text and additional readings. This may be displayed in the form of a web to help students work either individually or with a partner to research one important idea related to the graphic novel. Refer to the listed websites and further related readings and texts to help students in their research.

Inquiry Assignment for Students

After reading and discussing the graphic novel, *Stone*, have each student and a partner formulate a question they want to pursue further. Student pairs can then create displays based on their research. Students may include text, visuals, sounds, video, or any medium that is deemed appropriate.

Optional: Students can also give a four-to-seven minute presentation that explains the display.

Research Steps

Photocopy or write out the following research for students:

- Choose a question, then make note of what you and your partner already know about the question. Assess whether you have enough of a base to conduct research into this topic.
- Find at least three different sources of relevant information for answering your question. Take notes on each source, recording source information. Reflect on the quality of the source information: Have you included both print and Internet sources?
- Select and present the information using summaries, paraphrases, and quotations.
- Develop a display (pictures, text, symbols, objects, artifacts, models, sounds, borders, other visuals) to best represent the learning from your inquiry.

Book 2: *Scars*

Reading and Responding

Short descriptions of sections of the graphic novel appear here. Questions for discussion follow each description.

Cover

Examine the cover of *Scars* – the only colour image in the graphic novel. Notice images that are reminiscent of *Stone* – the eagle amulet, drugs, Edwin, and the presence of animals. Notice others parts, such as the detailed font, the combination of smoke/lightning across the image, the direction characters look, and the bumps on the kneeling character's skin.

Discussion questions:

- What do the dark background colours in this scene mean to you?
- Thinking back to your reading of *Stone*, who might some of these characters be? What are some of the plot points from *Stone* alluded to here?
- Where is the focus of the characters? Is there a central point on the page where their eyes meet? What might this say about this story?

NOTE: You might find it useful to refer back to the cover of Book 1, *Stone* and point out that the characters' were looking in different directions there.

- Where are the images of scars? What might the white scragged lines allude to?

- What could the presence of the snake mean? What might it mean that the snake is the only character with its eyes open in this scene?
- What do you think the character kneeling is doing? What might make someone kneel?

Pages 1–2

The same cracked photograph of a man appears here as in the opening page of Book 1, *Stone*. In *Scars*, though, Edwin grips the frame, staring at it, while sitting on his bed in his room. An empty prescription container lies on the floor. Just as his mother enters the room, Edwin cuts his finger on the broken glass. A tear falls down Edwin's cheek, and his mother touches his shoulder. She holds her son's hand as images of the man in the photograph are shown. These images are of a man holding a baby boy's hand, letting it go, and then sadly leaving the baby and his mother. Edwin's mother explains to Edwin that sometimes people have to let some things go "...no matter how much it hurts." Edwin does not understand, so his mother decides to tell him another story about his past.

Discussion questions:

- As in *Stone*, the graphic novel *Scars* is drawn in black and white. How does this influence your reading?
- The first panel of this graphic novel is the same as the first image of *Stone* (page 1, panel 1), but there are a few differences and similarities in the images immediately following. How does this similarity shape your expectation of *Scars* and reference *Stone* at the same time?
- How much of *Stone* must a reader know to understand these first two pages? Could you read *Scars* before you read *Stone*? What would be confusing and enlightening?
- We find out that the man in the photograph is someone Edwin hates. Who do you think this man is? What are some reasons a man might leave his family? Would "love" relate to any of these reasons?

Pages 3–7

Edwin's mother tells a story about White Cloud, a young man living in a Plains Cree community in 1870. The community has been ravaged by a devastating smallpox epidemic that infected and killed many. Just before he dies from smallpox, White Cloud's father hands White Cloud and his older brother the eagle amulet (from *Stone*). White Cloud's family wraps their father in buffalo

hide and places his body with the family's daughter and son, who have also died. White Cloud's mother decides that she, her two sons, and her baby girl must leave the community and live at a nearby riverbank.

Soon, White Cloud's mother and the baby grow ill from the disease. Just before she dies, White Cloud's mother sadly asks him what will happen to the family.

NOTE: The images of characters dying from smallpox in *Scars* are striking and discomfoting. You may want to discuss the images and "check in" with students how they are feeling about these images. The Talking Circle activity may be useful for this purpose.

Discussion questions:

- The image on page 3 is an echo from *Stone* (page 5). What are the similarities and differences in the two images?
- Passing on is a constant theme throughout these few pages. The act seems to involve senses of gift giving, change, and even death. What are the complex ways characters pass on things, including life? What might be some correlations between all of these that could demonstrate a cultural value with passing?
- Travelling is also a constant theme. What are all of the examples of characters travelling? What are the differences between these actions? Similarities? How might White Cloud's family moving to water (a constantly travelling body) demonstrate aspects – or perhaps a shift – in his own (and perhaps Edwin's) life?
- White Cloud witnesses both his parents die. What are some other examples of witnessing we have seen thus far? What is the impact of witnessing something rather than simply hearing about it? Is this a difference between reading graphic novels and regular novels?
- On page 4, Edwin's mother refers to the smallpox epidemic as "the end of the time we called paradise." What is paradise? How might the time before the epidemic be paradise? Do you agree with this?
- On page 6, White Cloud's brother carries a rifle. This reflects a significant technological difference from the time of *Stone*, when people only used bows and arrows. How might a gun reflect an entire change in the community's way of life? What would the impact of a gun be on hunting, war, and economic and social relations with other peoples? In addition to guns, what are some other goods that may have been traded between the Plains Cree and the Europeans that would change their ways of life?

Page 8

Edwin has fallen asleep listening to his mother tell him the story of White Cloud and his family. His mother finds his empty container of drugs on the floor underneath his bed. She lies in her bed, worrying about Edwin, and asks herself what will happen to her child.

Discussion questions:

- Through the use of words and images, the reader is asked to compare the events of White Cloud's life with Edwin's life. Make a chart to compare the experiences of White Cloud and Edwin. Some questions that may emerge from this comparison include:
 - What struggles do they have in common?
 - How has the past influenced them?
 - What related symbols can we see in their lives?
 - Do they both appear to suffer the same fate?
 - What does "it's only a matter of time" mean to their individual situations? Are their situations the same?
- Most of the time, Edwin and his mother have their eyes closed. While this clearly denotes sadness, they also have their eyes closed while doing other things activities. List these. What are the some things you can see when you close your eyes? Go back to page 1, panel 2. What might Edwin be looking at with his eyes closed?
- Shadows are a constant image in *Scars*. Find and list all of the uses of shadows up to this point in the novel. What might the author and illustrator be attempting to demonstrate through the use of shadows (other than as dim light)? What are shadows?
- White Cloud's mother and Edwin's mother are both mired in uncertainty about the future of their children. What similar and different things might they be worried about?

Pages 9–12

The next morning, Edwin's mother continues her narrative of White Cloud. With both his baby sister and older brother ill, White Cloud leaves them to find food – even though he fears he may never see them alive again. He searches for a long time, but cannot find any food. He decides to go to his now-dead community to scrounge, eventually taking meat that is potentially infected with smallpox. Returning to his brother and sister, he finds his brother cradling his baby sister in his arms. She has died.

His brother then hands White Cloud the eagle amulet. He tells White Cloud to go before he gets infected, so that the "family lives on." White Cloud, nervous and uncertain, leaves.

Back in the present, Edwin asks his mother how the smallpox epidemic started. She tells him that the disease was introduced by European traders and settlers, either accidentally or as a tool of war. Indigenous peoples did not have any immunity to the virus, so it spread quickly and devastated Aboriginal peoples everywhere. Germs, she explains, could live on weapons and fabric.

Discussion questions:

- Edwin's mother serves Edwin coffee. In a visual segue, Edwin's reflection in the drink turns into White Cloud's in water. What might dark water and clear water mean about the worlds surrounding the two young men?
- Smallpox was introduced both directly and indirectly by European settlers and traders. Contact between the two peoples always seems to carry both positive and negative implications. What are the positive and negative implications of other things that happened between these two peoples?
- Smallpox also altered relations among Aboriginal peoples, as seen on page 12. What are the many ways relations changed between Aboriginal communities after the introduction of the disease? What about relationships inside communities? How would smallpox alter tribal ceremonies? Government? Laws? Families? Wars?
- White Cloud's dog has now made several appearances in the story. Make note of his appearances. What role does he play in White Cloud's life? Note that White Cloud would rather eat infected food (and give it to his family) than consume his dog. What might this mean about the importance of the dog to him?

NOTE: It may be useful to refer to meanings of dogs in Plains Cree culture.

Pages 13–21

White Cloud walks for many days, fighting hard but growing weak and losing hope. As he is about to give up, a miracle happens. He is found by his uncle and a group of men, who have also left their infected community in a search of a new home. Although nervous that White Cloud may have the disease, they take White Cloud with them as his uncle states: "We are his family now."

Days later, the group comes upon a community devastated by smallpox. Death is everywhere. Soon they discover a tepee with a girl living in amongst the dead bodies. She is the only survivor of the community. Fearing infection, the group refuses to take her with them.. She pleads to come, singing a “ballad that ended with an expression of deep pain” but they leave her behind, much to White Cloud’s sadness.

White Cloud feels tremendous guilt about leaving the girl, telling the men that they could have left her clothes behind or something. He says that while the disease kills, it also leaves scars that “will never let me forget.” After everyone is asleep, White Cloud decides to travel back to the community to save the girl. He arrives too late. She has committed suicide, hanging herself in her tepee. He cuts her down and holds her dead body in his arms, telling her he is sorry he left her.

NOTE: Like the scenes of smallpox, students may be discomfited with this scene. You may want to check in again with students and use the Talking Circle concept.

Discussion questions:

- White Cloud is the “last” member of his community to survive. What burden does this carry? What does being the last member of a community mean? How would he relate this experience to that of the girl?
- White Cloud’s uncle finds him and convinces his companions that family is worth the risk of disease. What does this say about the importance of blood relations and the responsibility of family?
- What are the reasons that the party does not take the girl with them? What are the priorities here? Why is she not “family”? Would you have made the same choice?
- What do White Cloud’s scars on his arm not let him forget? If he has survived the disease, what does this say about the resiliency of his body? Of his character? Of his family? Of Native peoples? Does this change your opinion, as it does for White Cloud, of the reason his uncle’s party left the girl behind?
- An inability to forget leads White Cloud to return to the diseased community to save the girl. What has changed for him? For his sense of family? For his sense of responsibility?
- Stars play an interesting role in the background of this part of the story. Note two uses of these images. First, stars resemble the smallpox scars on White Cloud’s arm on page 18. Second, the symbols on the tepee the

girl is found in on page 15 and 19 resemble the stars in the sky as White Cloud runs back to the girl. What might finding life among stars mean? Notice, too, the linguistic closeness between the words “stars” and “scars.” Is there life in a universe of scars?

- These pages were inspired by the following passage from Cree oral history, recorded by Joseph Francis Dion in *My Tribe, The Crees* (1979, 66–67):

We were told a story of a small party of Crees trying desperately to avoid coming in contact with the sick until at last they came across a village of tepees where they least expected to find one. Instead of retreating, they proceeded to pass the camp from the wind side, but as they were moving swiftly along, they noticed a beautiful young woman emerging from a large tent in the middle of the circle. The girl stood in the doorway and in a loud clear voice she told them that she was the only survivor of the village. Then she sang one of her favourite ballads of the time, ending up with the word ahwiya, an expression of extreme pain. “How I used to love to hear this song when we were all alive,” she lamented as she retreated into the tepee. Some of the folks wanted to ask her to come along, but the elders would hear nothing of the kind. They were too concerned about trying to save their own hides.

A halt was called not far from the ghost village, and that night two young men decided to return and bring the unfortunate woman back with them. They reasoned that if they brought her a change of clothing she could not bring the disease with her.

The two men, arriving at the death camp, went and stood at the door of the tepee where the girl had been seen. When they did not get any response to their call they ventured within and there found the poor girl, her feet almost touching the ground. She had hanged herself.

In *Scars*, this scene is shocking, but it is based in oral tradition. What if this story was not true? Would it perpetuate stereotypes? Since it is from a work of nonfiction, what does this say about this moment in history amongst the Cree?

- Dion’s passage also demonstrates vividly the destruction smallpox had on relationships inside of Cree communities. How do relationships underlay a community? Its legal, social, economic, political parts? Are there any other examples throughout history of tragedies involving destroyed relationships?

- The reader is asked in these final moments to see the girl as part of White Cloud’s family, but as someone he ultimately cannot save because she cannot save herself. How does this reflect any other relationship in the story? What does it say about the other relationship? What might it teach White Cloud? Edwin?

Pages 21–26

When White Cloud arrives back at his uncle’s encampment, he finds the party has left. He is now completely alone. For White Cloud, sure death seems imminent. He runs into a nearby forest, haunted by memories and visions of his dead family and the girl. He then finds himself lost.

Back in the present, Edwin wakes up from a dream. He leaves his bed and finds his mother having trouble sleeping as well. He lies on the carpet on her floor and asks her to continue the story of White Cloud.

White Cloud eventually finds his way out of the forest and onto a riverbank where he collapses, feeling hopeless and aimless. Suddenly, he is visited by the spirit of his dead father, who tells White Cloud that he will not die. There is, he says, a distant community he can travel to that is safe. White Cloud asks his father if it is not better to die and join him. He is told that he must continue: “Your survival means that we are not forgotten. So we all live.” With those words, White Cloud decides he must continue. He re-ties the eagle amulet around his neck and begins his journey to the distant community.

Back in the present, Edwin accepts that he has to give up drugs. He empties a full container of pills down the toilet and flushes them away. His mother ties the eagle amulet around his neck – the same amulet worn by Stone and White Cloud – to help him on his journey of healing.

Discussion questions:

- Why do you think White Cloud’s uncle and his group without White Cloud?
- Notice that the rug Edwin is lying on is full of circles. Find all of the times circles are used in this novel and see if there are any correlations. What might the circle mean in these contexts? What are the differences in their uses?
- Although not directly described by the author, the Calling River from *Stone* (page 18) is likely the place where White Cloud meets the spirit of his father. It may be helpful to refer to the section of the Teacher’s

Guide for *Stone* to support discussions in this section regarding spirits, sacred spaces, and teachings.

- Just as when Stone met Bear in *Stone*, White Cloud receives a message and directions on how to live from the spirit of his father. By hearing these two stories from his mother about spirits visiting humans and giving direction, what is Edwin to take from this idea? Has he been visited by any spirits? Who?
- White Cloud’s brother, his father tells him, loved White Cloud enough to let him go. What does this mean? What are the examples of sacrifice in the novel? His brother, White Cloud is told by his father, lives on in “the hearts of others.” What does he mean by this? Do you agree? Why or why not?
- Edwin is convinced to get off drugs after learning about White Cloud. Is Edwin making a sacrifice? Who has most inspired Edwin’s decision? Why?
- Edwin is given the eagle amulet that has been in his family for over two centuries. Now, his mother passes the amulet to him. What does receiving it signify? Has Edwin earned it in the same way Stone and White Cloud earned it?

Pages 26–30

White Cloud sets out the next morning to find the community that the spirit of his father told him about. He travels a long distance, and doubt about his survival creeps into his head again. White Cloud suddenly sees a small cloud with a large snake coming out of it. Threatening White Cloud, the snake is held back by thunder and lightning (called thunderbird), which protects White Cloud until the rain washes him, and he is saved. Soon after, White Cloud finds the community his father promised. White Cloud survived, Edwin’s mother says, “...to pass on these stories to others, through many generations. So we never forget and never lose hope. So we know that we’re strong.”

She explains to Edwin that resiliency has always been a part of their family. Although our struggles have killed many, she states, scars remind “us of the past, ... memories of harder times,” but “the past doesn’t have to define us.” She explains that everyone is defined by the “actions we take; how we address the past and look to the future... to give up or survive.” She adds that much has been given up due to love, and love can be used to find those things again.

During all of this, the reader witnesses a flashback, taking place the day before the events of *Stone*. On a bus, Edwin

travels to a house and knocks on the door. Peering out from behind a locked door is an older man, reminiscent of the young man in the broken photograph. The two stare at one another as *Scars* comes to an end.

Discussion questions:

- At the same time that doubt enters his mind, White Cloud is confronted by the cloud snake. How are the two events related? How is doubt represented by a snake?
- Why do you think the thunderbird saves White Cloud? How does holding up the eagle amulet help White Cloud?
- The legend of the snake is a “story within a story,” a literary technique called an *allegory*. An allegory is a story that uses characters and events to describe some subject by suggestive resemblances. Some also call this an “extended metaphor.” What might the snake represent to White Cloud? What might the thunderbird represent? What if White Cloud was replaced by Edwin? What might Edwin’s snake and thunder be?
- Water “saves” White Cloud? What are all of the images of water “saving” (or at least supporting) characters? What does water mean in the context in this story?
- The final theme of *Scars* is one of resiliency – the ability to handle struggle with strength and perseverance. As shown with White Cloud, it is the ability to not let what creates scars beat you. Knowing what we know of what happens to Edwin in *Stone*, is resiliency the most important lesson he needs to learn? If not, what is the most important lesson he needs to learn?
- Why do you think Edwin wants to visit someone he hates? Is he coming there out of love or another emotion? Does the answer to this question lead to the events of *Stone*?
- Look at the man peering out from behind the door. Is this man Edwin’s father? What is the significance of a lock appearing under his head, and the reader not knowing for sure who this character is? What if it is his father? What if it isn’t?

3. Applying (after reading)

Reflection and Discussion Prompts

- What surprised you about this story? What did not?
- What questions do you still have about this story? What is “to be continued”?
- What research could you do to learn more about the following issues that are raised in the story:
 - › Plains Cree culture
 - › Canadian, Aboriginal, and your own history
 - › Health and suicide
 - › Smallpox, diseases, and “cures”
 - › Resiliency
 - › Senses of family and community
- Pick one section that you think is the most important or interesting in the graphic novel. Explain in one paragraph why you picked this particular section.
- What is the most evident message the author and illustrator wish to convey to you? What is the most important message?
- How does this message influence your thoughts on any of the abovementioned themes?
- Did you view any stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples in this story? How were they the same as or different from popular representations of stereotypes in the media? How did the author and illustrator engage with these stereotypes to get you to think about them in different ways?

Class Activities

Taking Alternate Perspectives

- Have students write the story of White Cloud from a different point of view – from White Cloud’s brother, uncle, or father. Have the new character express his thoughts and feelings.
- Have Edwin’s mother write an entry in her diary that explains why she is telling the story of White Cloud to Edwin. Have her express her thoughts and feelings about the story, how/when she heard it, and what she understands from it.

Responding to the Genre

- How do the artist’s style and choice of font and illustrations influence and/or communicate the story and mood of the graphic novel? How might different

choices in these areas change the book? How do illustrations add to or detract from the story?

- Try re-drawing a scene in the story from a different perspective. For example, from the dog, Edwin's mother, or White Cloud's uncle. Does this change your perspective of the story?
- With a group, select an important event from the novel, and present it as a tableau. (Tableaux are created by groups of individuals posing to represent a frozen picture based on an idea, theme, or key moment in a story.) The rest of the class can guess which event is being portrayed and discuss its importance in relation to the story. Try to condense the story into the seven most important scenes.

Historical and Cultural Responses

- Draw a timeline chart that includes all of the important events from both *Stone* and *Scars*. Add significant events from Cree and Canadian history to create a complete picture of the story.
- Using Edwin's mother's stories as guides, students will write their own historical story. Have each student bring in three or four photographs of ancestors from different time periods. Have on hand a selection of dated photographs from different time periods for students who forget to bring in photographs or who do not have any to bring to the classroom. In preparation for this activity, ask students to pose questions to their family members about the people and time periods in the photographs. In an oral or written presentation, have students answer the following questions:
 - › Who were my ancestors' family and community? Were they different from mine today?
 - › What kinds of things did my ancestors enjoy? Dislike? How are these similar to or different from the kinds of things I enjoy or dislike today?
 - › What were any obstacles my ancestors faced? How were these different from or similar to ones I face?
 - › What things from the past do I wish still existed today? What things from the past am I glad are different?
 - › Of all the things in my family's past, what has changed most drastically over the years? What caused these drastic changes? Could these changes have been avoided?

- › Does learning about my history help me learn about myself?

Optional: Assignment can be completed through a news media documentary or film narrative.

Learning Through Inquiry

- As a class, discuss the main messages of the graphic novel, highlight key concepts, and think of five to ten higher-level questions that emerge from your responses to the text and additional readings. This may be displayed in the form of a web to help students work either individually or with a partner to research one important idea related to the graphic novel. Refer to the listed websites and further related readings and texts to help students in their research.
- Have students create three questions they would ask each character and then write how each character would respond to the questions. Have students create a short monologue as each character for presentation or hand-in.

Inquiry Assignment for Students

- After reading and discussing the graphic novel, *Scars*, have each student and a partner formulate a question they want to pursue further. This question could be regarding plot, history, theme, or an artistic one for the author/illustrator on some aspect of the graphic novel (such as shadows, hair, tribal clothing, etc.). Student pairs can then create displays based on their research. Students may include text, visuals, sounds, video, or any medium that is deemed appropriate.

Optional: Students can also give a four-to-seven minute presentation that explains the display.

Research Steps

Photocopy or write out the following for students:

- Choose a question, then make note of what you and your partner already know about the question. Assess whether you have enough of a base to conduct research into this topic.
- Find at least three different sources of relevant information for answering your question. Take notes on each source, recording source information. Reflect on the quality of the source information: Have you included both print and Internet sources?
- Select and present the information using summaries, paraphrases, and quotations.

- Develop a display (pictures, text, symbols, objects, artifacts, models, sounds, borders, other visuals) to best represent the learning from your inquiry.

Book 3: *Ends/Begins*

Reading and Responding

Short descriptions of sections of the graphic novel appear here. Questions for discussion follow each description.

Cover

Examine the cover of *Ends/Begins* – the only colour image in the graphic novel. Next, examine the inside cover. Notice images that are reminiscent of *Stone* and *Scars* – the eagle amulet, darkness, and night. Notice other parts, such as the detailed font, the facial expressions, use of depth, the direction in which the characters look, and the clothing the characters are wearing. Point out that the inside cover of *Ends/Begins* holds relative importance and clarity as we already know certain details about the amulet.

Discussion questions:

- In the context of the 7 Generations series, who do you think the two boys on the cover are? What leads you to this conclusion?
- Compare the covers of *Stone*, *Scars*, and *Ends/Begins*. What are the similarities? Differences? How are changes in time, history, and geography represented?
- The cover of *Ends/Begins* is the first one in the 7 Generations series in which a character is looking directly at the reader (on the covers of *Stone* and *Scars*, the characters are looking away or have their eyes closed). What might this indicate? Does body language add to this character’s expression? Who or what might the older boy be looking at? What do you think his expression means?
- There are several striking and multi-dimensional symbols in the front cover scene, including birch trees, snow, the school, the cross, the moon, stone/rock, the sky, and clothing. What brings two or more of these images together thematically? What might this suggest about the story you are about to read? (A common answer might be that they are “entryways” for thinking about the novel before reading it; for example, “cold,” “nature,” “darkness,” or “light.”)

NOTE: You might find it useful to refer back to some of your previous discussions about Plains Cree culture and history.

- Hands are a predominant theme. What are the similarities between the older boy’s hands and the hands on the inside cover? What are the hands holding? Are there any similarities between the way the older boy is holding his hands over the younger boy’s heart and the way the hands are holding the amulet?

Pages 1–4

The story begins on March 24, 2010, the day before the events in *Scars*, the second book of the series. Edwin is standing by the front door of a house. A man who knows Edwin answers the door. He tells Edwin to go away and not return. The man quickly closes the door and locks it. As Edwin shuffles down the street, he notices the man standing by a window, watching him walk away.

A flashback to 16 years earlier is shown (June 10, 1994). A small boy is playing inside a house – the same house Edwin just visited. A young man, who appears downtrodden, is sitting nearby on a couch and drinking something from a bottle. After a letter carrier delivers the mail, the man opens the front door, takes the mail from the mailbox, and quickly opens one of the letters. He leaves the front door open and walks into another room. The boy wanders out the front door and onto the street. There, he kneels down and continues to play. He does not notice as a speeding car suddenly appears, driving straight toward him.

The story returns to the present-day (April 13, 2010). Edwin answers the door and comes face-to-face with the man who refused to see him three weeks earlier. The older man, whose name is James, tries to speak to Edwin, but Edwin refuses to talk to him. Instead, he slams the door shut. Through the closed door, James pleads that he wants to “explain things.” Edwin refuses to open the door and crouches and cradles his head in his hands.

Discussion questions:

- Who is the small boy in the flashback? Who is the young man?
- What are some things you notice about James’s house? His neighbourhood?
- Locks and doors play a significant role in these pages. List the times they are shown. What are locks and doors separating? What are they keeping safe? Keeping out? Knowing what you do know about Edwin, and perhaps now about his father, can you identify other examples of “locks” in the emotions and feelings of the characters? What happens when locks are unlocked and doors are opened?

- In the flashback, what is James drinking? What is he looking for in the mailbox? What leads you to these conclusions?
- In the opening sequence on page 1, James looks out a window and watches Edwin walk down the street. He seems unable to help Edwin with whatever he wants from him (as we found out in *Scars*, Edwin is contemplating suicide). On page 3, the reader is in the same position as Edwin's father – watching as young Edwin is about to be struck by a car. How does it feel to watch someone in danger and be helpless to do anything about it? Make a list of emotions and feelings you might experience.
- In the flashback, young Edwin plays with two “Transformer” toys. When the story returns to the present day, on page 4, Edwin has grown up into a man about the same age his father was in the flashback. How has Edwin transformed? How has he not transformed? What transforming might he have yet to do?
- James's hands say a lot about him. Look at the shapes and actions of his hands on page 4. What might these two expressions mean? What leads you to these conclusions?
- Edwin refuses to allow James to speak to him, and slams the door in his face. James speaks through the door anyway. What does this say about the power of speech? Of storytelling?

Pages 5–7

Another flashback begins on page 5 – the year is 1964. It is springtime, and two brothers (the older James and the younger Thomas) are relaxing and playing outside in the country. They watch frogs, wrestle, and chase each other. When Thomas trips on a rock and skins his knee, James comforts him. Eventually, they head home.

During these scenes a voiceover of their grandfather speaks to them, explaining that “the white people are numerous.” “Our people are now scattered,” he remarks, “detached from the strength of our past.” “The circle... where all life ends, begins...” he ominously states, “is broken.” He tells them that they must go to residential school so they can “...survive this changing world.”

On page 7, James's voice takes over the narration. He and Edwin's mother are sitting on a log along the shores of a lake. He explains that he met Edwin's mother when he was “very young.” He has told her that he will soon be moving to a residential school. She tells James that she is sad she is

not going to school with him. James tells her that it is good she is not going. She asks if he will forget her. He promises not to and gives her the eagle amulet as seen in *Stone* and *Scars*. They walk away holding hands.

Discussion questions:

- Notice the two styles of speech box inserts – one for the grandfather and one for James. What does each box suggest about each speaker? How did you come to this conclusion?
- Hands, again, play an important theme in these pages. Make a list of the various things hands do, hold, and touch. What might hands show about relationships? How are the hands different from and/or similar to those seen on the previous pages? Reflect back to the image on the inside cover.
- Frog (Ayik) is a prominent figure in Plains Cree Tradition. Many songs, stories, and games relate to this figure. There are also historical events for the Cree that reference frogs, such as the conflict in 1885 at Frog Lake (in Alberta, also now a Canadian National Historic Site). Take some time to consider what may be referenced (culturally, historically, politically) by the boys as they watch frogs on page 6, especially in the context of the grandfather's statements.
- Do a “close reading” of some of the grandfather's metaphors that appear on page 6. “White people” are likened to “birds,” and the Cree are likened to “leaves.” We see our first example of birds (what looks like Canada geese) on page 5. What are some of the benefits of using these descriptions? What do they enhance? What do they obscure?
- The Cree, according to the grandfather, have “...fallen from what we once knew.” When Thomas falls down and wounds his knee, James helps him and tends to him. How do Thomas and James's actions support this statement? Contradict it?
- Nipiy (water) is very sacred to the Cree. Water is a critical part of ceremonies, signifies relationships, and represents life itself. On page 7, Edwin's mother and father dip their feet, together, into the lake. What could this action represent?
- Edwin's mother remains unnamed in the 7 Generations series up to this point. How do you feel about this?
- Before he leaves for the residential school, James gives Edwin's mother the eagle amulet. It is the same amulet that she gave to Edwin at the end of *Scars* (when she

told him “it has the power of our culture”). How do you think James got the amulet? Who gave it to him?

NOTE: Students may need to use some imagination to answer the above question.

Pages 8–10

James and Thomas are dropped off by their grandfather at the residential school, which is located just two kilometres from their home. Thomas tells his grandfather he is scared. Even after his grandfather tells him to “listen to them” and that James will look after him, Thomas cries. Their grandfather also cries softly as he departs for home, leaving Thomas and James with a priest at the doorsteps to the school.

James and Thomas feel sad and anxious, as if they are on a different “planet.” James turns to the priest and says “Tansi” (hello in Cree) and is slapped. He is told to never speak “that devil’s tongue again.” The priest, James explains, said “we’d go to hell if we did.” Any use of Cree from this point on, he says, has to be covert or not spoken at all.

The boys enter the school. To soothe Thomas, James tells him that they must “do as they want, and we’ll be okay.” The boys’ hair is then cut and they are dressed in school clothes. James explains, “Pretty soon we looked like whites, except, you know, for the brown they couldn’t scrub away.”

Discussion questions:

- Hair plays a predominant theme in these pages. For instance, how hair is kept and styled or unkempt and not styled says a great deal about each character. Trace some of these images. Draw some similarities with hair as found in *Stone* and *Scars*. In Tomson Highway’s novel *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, Jeremiah has his hair cut at residential school (what is referred to as “the slaughter”) and this removes his “power” (52–53, 74). Have James’s power and Thomas’s power been removed? How?
- What do you think are the reasons that James and Thomas’s grandfather took them to the school? Are these valid reasons? What choices might he have had?
- How does the school look to you? Where do the students sleep? Where are the classrooms? Where is the chapel? The cafeteria?
- Language is another predominant theme. What are the various examples of language on these pages? What do you think the term *devil’s tongue* means?

- Thomas and James are “cleaned up.” What is “cleaned” and how? What does James mean when he says that they “couldn’t scrub away” the “brown”? How does this statement demonstrate interests in assimilation throughout Canadian history (use the list of historical events in this guide for examples)? How does it demonstrate racism? Resilience?
- On page 10, doorways and windows once again play an important part. This time, however, the doors are wide open. When did you see doors open before? Are there any other locks, if not on the doors? We see another “window” in the final panel. In the last panel on page 10, who might James and Thomas be looking at?

Pages 11–14

James and Thomas pray before bedtime on their first night. Thomas tells James that he is scared and misses their grandfather. James promises Thomas that he will care for him and “won’t let anything bad happen.” They go to sleep.

A loud alarm wakes up James and Thomas at 5 a.m. They quickly learn the pre-breakfast routine of their new surroundings: praying for 30 minutes, brushing their teeth, attending chapel, praying (in Latin) for an hour. They are constantly reminded never to speak Cree. Breakfast consists of stale bread, oatmeal, and a spoonful of cod-liver oil, which they “puke in the bathroom after.”

James does not attend classes. Instead, he is assigned to “manual training,” a regiment that sees him doing countless laborious tasks, such as raking, digging, carpentry, and milking goats. Thomas is placed in the classroom and taught Latin and other subjects.

James explains that he is too busy with work during the day to see Thomas much. However, Thomas is often absent at dinner, for reasons “he never told me.” Although James’s work makes him physically stronger, he admits he has learned little at residential school (“seems like I unlearned things”). When he is not working, he worries about Thomas and spends a lot of his time missing Thomas and home.

Discussion questions:

- Notice how many times James’s eyes are closed in these scenes – when he is praying, sleeping, eating, and even when he is working. What might be similar about all of these instances? Different? Throughout the 7 Generations series, many characters have kept

their eyes closed. When? Are these instances similar to those in *Ends/Begins*? Different?

- Again, look at the use of hands. What are they holding, doing, touching? How are these situations different from or similar to previous scenes?
- The relationship between food and the boys is indicative of their first few days. How is their resistance to food indicative of their relationship with the school?
- James is learning certain things. What are some of the things he is learning? What, then, does he mean when he says it “seems like I unlearned things”?
- On page 14, James is raking leaves. Where have leaves been mentioned before? What might raking leaves mean?
- Notice the similarity of colour and shape between the birds on page 5 and the nuns on pages 12–14. How do the birds on page 5 influence your reading of images on page 13?
- In the final panel on page 14, Thomas is missing. Where do you think he is? How would you feel if your brother or sister went missing? What would you think?

Pages 15–17

On page 15, James explains that Thomas “never seemed to want to talk.” One night, Thomas, scared and shaking, climbs into bed with James, getting “as close as he could.” Thomas whispers that he wants to go home. James does not say anything, but he holds Thomas “until he stopped, and we both fell asleep like that.”

James and Thomas return home that winter for a holiday. Together they go walking over the snow-covered hills with Edwin’s mother. She asks James about residential school. He describes it as “quiet, really quiet.” When she says, “It’s quiet here too, you know,” James explains, “There it’s loneliness... Here, it’s peace.” As he expresses his concern for Thomas, they turn around and find Thomas covered in a pile of snow he had shaken from a tree. Only his head and shoulders are visible, and he is grinning from ear to ear.

Back in the present, James and Edwin are sitting in the living room of Edwin’s house. James says that afternoon with Thomas was the “last time” he saw Thomas smile, “like a kid should.” With tears in his eyes, he pulls a picture of Thomas out of his wallet. He tells Edwin that

up till then he had no idea what Thomas was going through at the residential school.

Discussion questions:

- Nighttime seems to be a time of refuge for James and Thomas. What does night allow each of them to do that they cannot do during the day?
- What scares you? On page 15, Thomas is shaking. What would make you shake? How might being at home cure fears that may cause shaking?
- Feet play an important role in these pages. What do feet do? Look at all of the images of feet in *Ends/Begins* up to this point (for instance, Edwin and James’s feet on pages 2–4; Edwin’s mother and father’s feet in the water on page 7). Now, look at the footsteps in the snow on page 16. When do feet leave markings? When do they not? How are footprints evidence of history? Are they evidence of anything else? Experience? Knowledge? Existence? How far has James come? Edwin? Thomas? Edwin’s mother? You, as a reader in the 7 Generations series? How far do all have yet to go?
- Snow plays a multiple role on these pages. What is snow? How is snow both dangerous and beautiful? How does snow describe (and, perhaps, foreshadow) the boys’ experiences?
- On page 16, James describes the quiet of land covered in snow as “peace.” How does snow make the world “quiet”?
- Edwin’s mother says “I’m sorry” on page 16. What is she sorry for? How is she “sorry” for not attending residential school? Why does anyone say “sorry” to anyone else? Who else might be sorry?
- On page 17, back in the present, James is crying. He holds a photo of Thomas, and it is obvious at this point in the story that something very bad happened to him. How is the photo of Thomas different from the photo of James you saw on page 1 of *Stone*? How do these two images represent Thomas and James? Are these representations accurate?

Pages 18–23

A flashback to Thomas’s first night at residential school is shown. While James is sleeping, Thomas is awoken by the priest. He tells Thomas, “God loves you” and orders Thomas to “come with me.” The priest takes him to the bathroom and fills a bathtub with water. He tells Thomas that he is a dirty boy “so we’re going to clean you.” The

priest removes Thomas's pyjama top and closes the bathroom door. The next morning, while everyone else is at breakfast, the priest beats Thomas with a leather strap and tells him that if he ever tells his brother what happened both he and James will go to hell.

James explains that he never knew what was happening to Thomas, because he was always outside working during the day. He has tried not to think "about things you would've changed if you only knew."

Although James does not know why, one night Thomas wets his bed. Scared "they'd find out," he crawls into bed with James for protection and support. The next morning, the priest discovers the wet sheets and publicly embarrasses him. He forces Thomas to sit in the hallway all day, wearing his dirty underwear on his head and draping the soiled sheet over his shoulders. Thomas is humiliated as his fellow students laugh at him.

James tells Edwin that he is overwhelmed with guilt. He had told Thomas to learn and obey them. Instead, what Thomas learned was "their disdain for us... contempt for our people and our ways." Thomas also learned "to keep their secret...and I promised to protect him."

Discussion questions:

NOTE: The images on these pages are graphic and disturbing. A great deal of preparation is necessary for the emotional impact of these images and the issues they may stir. Counselling should be made aware and available.

- Shadows, darkness, and night are used in many of the scenes on these pages. What are shadows? What is darkness? What is needed for both to exist? How is nighttime shown as a time of refuge but also as a time of violence? How does James come to learn these double-sided teachings?
- The door is the most striking image on these pages. Just what the door is obscuring, hiding, keeping locked inside is a powerful and disturbing thought. How does this door and lock demonstrate everything Thomas had to do? Why do you think he kept quiet?
- Thomas's story is a much different perspective of residential school than James's. How does his version show storytelling and history as "incomplete"? Can history ever be "complete"? How?
- Much about the double-sided nature of words is unveiled on these pages. New definitions of *love*, *clean*, *dirty*, *quiet*, *water*, and *loneliness* are shown. What do they say about language? About context? About the power of words?

- Power is a recurrent theme in these panels. Who has power? Who does not have power? How were residential schools a reflection of power – gaining it, losing it, and learning about it? For example, do a "close reading" of the final panel on page 22. How are students "teaching" each other about power? In a related question: Why might the priest be unneeded (reflected by being in the background) in this scene? Are the students now the teachers?
- What might James have done if he had known what was going on with Thomas?
- James's hands on page 23 are almost mirror representations to Edwin's hands as they appear in several places in the 7 Generations series. Where else can you find these hands? Are the contexts of both characters during those times the same? What makes them different?
- On page 23, the way James is sitting says a lot about the guilt he still feels. How does guilt feel? What relieves guilt? Are these positive or negative coping strategies? Why is James holding his head in his hands?

Pages 24–29

James explains that one winter evening he is too tired after work to eat dinner. All he wants is to head straight to bed. He is about to open the door to the sleeping dorm when he hears a thumping on the other side of the door. It was, he says, "the sound of snapping leather, like clapping hands, then whimpers from my brother. Pleading for mercy." He opens the door, grabs the priest's wrist, throws him up against the wall, and hits him with the strap several times. When the priest tells him, "You're going to hell, savage," James responds (in Cree): "Ekota kista kayan" (You will be there, also). James continues to beat the priest for what "seemed like an eternity."

Meanwhile, Thomas runs out of the dorm and down the hallway. When James finally turns his attention from the priest to his brother, Thomas is nowhere to be found. James finds the front doors to the school wide open and sees footprints in the snow. He follows the footprints through the woods. He finds Thomas lying motionless, barefoot in the snow wearing only his pyjamas. It appears Thomas tripped and struck his head on a rock. He is on his side beside a pool of blood. James screams, then cradles the lifeless body of his brother.

Discussion questions:

- On page 29, is Thomas still alive when James finds him? If he is, do you think he will likely die? Why?
- How do you feel while you are reading these pages? Is violence ever warranted? What is going to happen to James if he returns to the school?
- James explains he felt “rage.” What is rage? Is it because of rage that he continues to beat the priest well after Thomas is free?
- Hands do virtually all of the actions on these pages, but mostly through acts of violence. How do the changes in the use of hands throughout *Ends/Begins* demonstrate the experiences of James and Thomas at residential school?
- How has James’s work at residential school prepared him for this situation? What did he “learn” that helps him in this moment?
- Examine all of the acts of resistance to residential school throughout *Ends/Begins*. How does this act of violence compare? What is the significance of James’s speaking Cree to the priest as he is beating him?
- Thomas appears to have fallen and hit his head. Where has “falling” been mentioned or seen before? What is different this time?
- James finds Thomas by following his footprints in the snow. How are footprints evidence of endings and beginnings? What might this story be demonstrating to Edwin through the use of footprints? Trace back all of the images of feet in *Ends/Begins*. What brings all of them together?
- Thomas runs into a forest full of birch trees. Have you seen birch trees before in this series? What do birch trees do? What properties do they have? What can their bark be used for?

Page 30 and Poem

A final flashback shows a young Edwin, about to be hit by a car. Just before he is struck, James grabs the boy, saving his life. Once they are inside the house, James yells at Edwin for wandering outside and reaches for his leather belt to beat him. Just then, Edwin’s mother returns home and sees James raise the leather strap.

A final poem, entitled “Ends/Begins,” ends *Ends/Begins*. A picture of Thomas and James in residential school is shown.

Discussion questions:

- Edwin’s life has been saved before. Who saved him before? How?
- James is repeating a cycle of violence that he learned in residential school. What other evidence is there that he is living in trauma from his experiences at the residential school? How might Edwin inherit James’s trauma?
- James clearly cares for Edwin, but he is going to hurt him. Why would he do this? Why do people hurt those who they care about?
- This scene is not the first one you have seen of residential school students repeating the violence perpetuated on them. Where else have you seen this?
- What do you think is going to happen? Do you think James can stop himself from hurting Edwin? What role will Edwin’s mother play in this situation? What leads you to these conclusions?
- Read the poem “Ends/Begins.” Try to attach one line to a specific page.
- As a reader, how does the poem make you feel? Why do you think the author ends *Ends/Begins* with a poem? What are poems, and what do they do? What does a poem do that a story cannot do?

3. Applying (after reading)

Reflection and Discussion Prompts

- What surprised you about this story? What did not?
- What questions do you still have about this story? What is “to be concluded”?
- What research could you do to learn more about the following issues that are raised in the story:
 - › Plains Cree culture
 - › Canadian, Aboriginal, and your own history
 - › Health and suicide
 - › Resiliency
 - › Senses of family and community
 - › Residential school and intergenerational legacies
 - › Physical, emotional, sexual abuses
- Pick one section that you think is the most important or interesting in the graphic novel. Explain in one paragraph why you picked this particular section.

- What is the most evident message the author and illustrator wish to convey to you? What is the most important message? How does this message influence your thoughts on any of the abovementioned themes?
- Did you view any stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples in this story? How were they the same as or different from popular representations of stereotypes in the media? How did the author and illustrator engage with these stereotypes to get you to think about them in different ways?

Class Activities

Taking Alternate Perspectives

- Have James write a letter to Edwin that explains why he is telling him the story of his experience at a residential school. Have him express his thoughts and feelings and what he understands and learned from the experience.

Responding to the Genre

- How do the artist's style and choice of font and illustrations influence and/or communicate the story and mood of the graphic novel? How might different choices in these areas change the book? How do illustrations add to or detract from the story?
- With a group, select an important event from the novel, and present it as a tableau. (Tableaux are created by groups of individuals posing to represent a frozen picture based on an idea, theme, or key moment in a story.) The rest of the class can guess which event is being portrayed and discuss its importance in relation to the story. Try to condense the story into the seven most important scenes. Use the poem "Ends/Begins" to frame your performance.

Historical and Cultural Responses

- Draw a timeline chart that includes all of the important events from *Stone*, *Scars*, and *Ends/Begins*. Add significant events from Cree and Canadian history to create a "complete" picture of the story.
- Using Edwin's father's stories as guides, students will write their own historical "story." Have each student bring in three or four photographs of ancestors from different time periods. Have on hand a selection of dated photographs from different time periods for students who forget to bring in photographs or who do not have any to bring to the classroom. In preparation for this activity, ask students to pose questions to their family members about the people

and time periods in the photographs. In an oral or written presentation, have students answer the following questions:

- › Who were my ancestors' family and community? Were they different from mine today?
- › What kinds of things did my ancestors enjoy? Dislike? How are these similar to or different from the kinds of things I enjoy or dislike today?
- › What were any obstacles my ancestors faced? How were these different from or similar to ones I face?
- › What things from the past do I wish still existed today? What things from the past am I glad are different?
- › Of all the things in my family's past, what has changed most drastically over the years? What caused these drastic changes? Could these changes have been avoided?
- › Does learning about my history help me learn about myself?

Optional: Assignment can be completed through a news media documentary or film narrative.

Learning Through Inquiry

- As a class, discuss the main messages of the graphic novel, highlight key concepts, and think of five to ten higher-level questions that emerge from your responses to the text and additional readings. This may be displayed in the form of a web to help students work either individually or with a partner to research one important idea related to the graphic novel. Refer to the listed websites and further related readings and texts to help students in their research.
- Have students think of three questions they would ask each character and then write each character's fictional responses. Students can create a short monologue for each character and present to the class or hand in.

Inquiry Assignment for Students

- After reading and discussing the graphic novel, *Ends/Begins*, have each student and a partner formulate a question they want to pursue further. This question could be regarding plot, history, theme, or an artistic one for the author/illustrator on some aspect of the graphic novel (such as shadows, hair, tribal clothing). Student pairs can then create displays based on their research. Students may include text, visuals, sounds, video, or any medium that is deemed appropriate.

Optional: Students can also give a four-to-seven minute presentation that explains the display.

Research Steps

Photocopy or write out the following for students:

- Choose a question, then make note of what you and your partner already know about the question. Assess whether you have enough of a base to conduct research into this topic.
- Find at least three different sources of relevant information for answering your question. Take notes on each source, recording source information. Reflect on the quality of the source information. Have you included both print and Internet sources?
- Select and present the information using summaries, paraphrases, and quotations.
- Develop a display (pictures, text, symbols, objects, artifacts, models, sounds, borders, other visuals) to best represent the learning from your inquiry.

Book 4: *The Pact*

Reading and Responding

Short descriptions of sections of the graphic novel appear here. Questions for discussion follow each description.

Cover

Examine the cover of *The Pact* – on it is the only colour image in the graphic novel. Next, examine the inside cover. Notice images that are reminiscent of *Stone*, *Scars*, and/or *Ends/Begins* – the eagle amulet, trees, darkness, and light. Notice other parts, such as the detailed font, the facial expressions, use of depth, the direction in which the characters are looking, and the clothing the characters are wearing. Point out that the inside cover of *The Pact* holds relative importance and clarity as we learn more about the amulet.

Discussion questions:

- In the context of the 7 Generations series, who do you think the characters on the cover are? What leads you to this conclusion?
- Compare the covers of *Stone*, *Scars*, *Ends/Begins*, and *The Pact*. What are the similarities? Differences? How are changes in time, history, and geography represented?
- This is the first time we see a female on the cover of any book in the series. What might this suggest about

the role of a female character in this story, especially in relation to the roles of other characters?

- The scene on the cover of *The Pact* is the first in the 7 Generations series that does not take place at night. What time of day is it? What might the time represent in terms of this story? What about the season that is depicted?
- This is the first cover since *Stone* that shows a character who is moving. What are some similarities and differences you can find between the moving characters on each of these covers? (Similarities include: characters are running in same direction, each is wearing the eagle amulet, each has hands gripped in fists. Differences include: characters are wearing different clothes, one has his eyes open and the other's eyes are closed, one is carrying items and the other is not.) What might some of these similarities and differences say about these characters and the way they relate to each other?
- Where has Edwin mentioned “walking in the woods” before?
- What is a “pact”? Who makes pacts? Why are pacts made? Have you ever made a pact?
- Hands are a predominant feature on all of the covers – both outside and inside covers – and are strategically placed in interesting ways. What might certain characters be holding? Gesturing toward? How do the positions of the hands represent how the characters are feeling?

Pages 1–4

The story opens in 1965 – when James finds his younger brother, Thomas, in the snow in the forest outside the residential school (see *Ends/Begins*, page 29). Thomas has tripped and hit his head on a rock. James picks up the lifeless body of Thomas and carries him to their family's home. The family, and James in particular, are distraught, because it is too late to help the young man. Thomas is dead.

Soon after, a funeral is held for Thomas. James is filled with guilt over his inability to protect his brother from the abuse he received at the residential school. James retreats into his thoughts and is inconsolable. One day, Edwin's mother arrives to visit, but James has become so depressed he does not answer the door. She leaves, crying.

Discussion questions:

- Reflect on the events leading to these scenes. What just happened? Why did James and Thomas attend residential school in the first place? Who took them there? How would you feel if you were the boys' grandfather?
- It is unknown if James told his family about the events that led up to Thomas's accident. Do you think he told them? What would be his reasons for telling them? Why might he not tell them?
- At the funeral, James states he is "trapped" in his thoughts. He feels guilty both for what he "could have done" and for what he "did." List these in a small chart of actions, and beside each include what feelings he might have. Examine each action, and discuss whether or not James was responsible for these actions and what, if anything, he could have done differently.
- James states that Thomas's skin feels "like clay... like marble." Describe the texture of each. What is each used to make? How might clay and marble illustrate what Thomas was to James in life and in death?
- Doorways and windows are highly representative of the experiences of Aboriginal peoples after residential school and during this time period in Canadian history. Examine the roles of doors and windows in these pages, and discuss what might be meant by using these images.
- When was the last time you saw Edwin's mother? At that time, what did she say to James? What did they promise to each other? What reasons might James have to not see her? Does he "see" her? How?

Pages 5–10

The story returns to 1994. James is about to use his belt strap to hit young Edwin for playing in the street (see *Ends/Begins*, pages 2–3 and 30). Lauren, Edwin's mother, touches James's hand to stop him from striking Edwin. James drops the belt. Edwin picks up the belt and plays with it as James collapses on the couch, shocked at what he almost did to his son. He tells Lauren that he is worried he may, one day, hurt Edwin. Lauren tells James that he must "deal with the demons" before he can "be a father to him." "You need to heal yourself," she tells him. James enters Edwin's bedroom, hugs him, and tells him goodbye. He leaves, promising Lauren he will get better.

The story then returns to "present day," in 2010. After telling Edwin the story of his time in residential school, James apologizes to his son for leaving him 16 years

earlier. Edwin is furious and unforgiving that he "grew up without a dad." James tries to explain to Edwin that he has been trying to recover from his experiences, but he is overwhelmed by guilt. He tells Edwin, "The night Thomas died has always haunted me."

Discussion questions:

- At this point in *The Pact* three distinct time periods (1965, 1994, 2010) have been covered. How do you feel about all of these time jumps? Are they hard for you to follow? What might the author be suggesting with these constant movements in time?
- The "Transformer" toy on the floor has already been discussed in *Ends/Begins* (see page 34 of Teacher's Guide). Now, another toy – crayons – seems relevant to the story. With the exceptions of book covers, the 7 Generations series is in black and white. What opportunities might Edwin's crayons be suggesting?
- Why does James want to punish the young Edwin? What leads him to feel regret, and, ultimately, leave his son and Lauren? Are these good reasons for abandoning his family?
- The use of the belt by James and Edwin are particularly illustrative of their experiences. Discuss the differences and how history can shape how a person acts and thinks.
- What are demons? What are James's "demons"? How can demons "haunt" a person?
- In the first three books of the 7 Generations series, the outdoors has been the dominant setting. It is where characters have talked, visited, and come to decisions about their future. In *The Pact*, living rooms have replaced the outdoors. Do you think that what James has experienced "outdoors" has made him feel safer to be indoors than to be outside? Could he have this conversation with Edwin outdoors?
- Edwin confronts his father, saying he "grew up without a dad." How could growing up without a father impact a person? What would a son miss out on? What might he gain by spending more time with his mother?
- James says that he was away for so long because of his residential-school experiences, which led to constant feelings of fear and hopelessness. How might these emotions, and perhaps others, make someone a bad parent? How was this illustrated when Edwin was a boy? How was this illustrated when James was a young man? What do you think James is afraid will happen again?

Pages 11–18

James explains to Edwin that his inability to care for Thomas in residential school has left him with feelings of guilt that are overwhelming and paralyzing. These feelings are why he could not be a parent to Edwin. For years he drowned his guilt with alcohol. He tells Lauren that he cannot get over the death of Thomas and his self-destructive behaviour. She says, “Then I have to let go of you, James.” She returns to the city and continues her education.

Years pass. Lauren finishes school and finds work in the city, while James remains immersed in his anger and alcoholism – and his thoughts about Lauren. One day, Lauren arrives at James’s house. She tells him that she could not stop thinking about him. “You need to live. Not in your thoughts. You need to really live,” she says. Lauren explains that she will not be his “savior,” but she is willing to give their relationship another chance. James, wishing for a better life, promises to change.

Discussion questions:

- Edwin touches James’s hand for the first time. Why? How have they come “together”?
- Notice the strategically placed blanket in the middle panel on page 11, replaced by bottles of alcohol in the next panel. How is alcohol like a “blanket”? How much time has gone by between these two panels?
- On page 12, James stares at the photograph he keeps of Thomas. Where have you seen these picture frames before in the 7 Generations series? Of what do pictures remind people? How does looking at people through frames resemble the ways characters look at each other throughout this series? How does this resemble the experience of the reader and his/her experience of the characters in the series?
- Thomas is literally “buried” under the sign of the cross, both in the cemetery and at the church. How does this mirror James’s residential-school experiences?
- Lauren and James meet at the same location where they met before he left for residential school. He promised then to “come back.” Has he? Why or why not?
- Lauren chooses to leave James. Why? Are her reasons good reasons? What are her options?
- Lauren is still wearing the eagle amulet she received from James in *Ends/Begins*. She is also wearing it when she leaves in the car and later when she is living in the

city. If she has left James, why is she still wearing it? On page 16, when she removes it from around her neck and holds it in her hands, what do you imagine she is thinking about?

- The two panels on page 14 are an example of juxtaposition. How do both panels represent “education”? Of “feeding” oneself? Of the history of many Aboriginal peoples in Canada?
- When Lauren finds James in the cemetery, they go down to the river where they decide to reconcile. How significant is it that they return to this place? Reflect back to two other times (in *Ends/Begins*) when they spend time together at this location. How has their relationship changed since the first time they were here? How do their three visits here illustrate the impact of colonization on Aboriginal communities in Canada?
- Do you believe James when he promises Lauren he will change? What has led James to make this decision to change? James and Lauren touch hands. How have they come “together” after so many years apart?

Pages 19–25

Lauren gives birth in 1991 to Edwin. James tells Edwin that he gave him hope and became “my light.” He explains to Edwin that his birth made him take action to recover, to be a better father and person. Edwin demands to know why James has taken 16 years to “heal.” James tries to explain that alcoholism, hopelessness, and despair created very deep wounds. During these years, however, he has never forgotten his promise to Lauren and Edwin – “...the pact and the hope ...to be with you again.”

When James visits his son in the hospital after Edwin’s suicide attempt, he realizes it is time to complete his healing journey and come back home. Edwin is too angry to listen any further to his father and retreats to his room. Lauren intervenes, telling James that this is all occurring too fast for their son. James needs to “give him some time.”

Discussion questions:

- Has James lived up to his promise – his pact that he made with Lauren?
- Hands remain a central theme throughout these pages. How does the increasing use of hands and touching suggest a change in Edwin’s life and his family? Look at James’s hands on pages 24–25. How do they signify the continuing journey the two men have yet to travel to reach each other?

- On page 20, and for the first time in *The Pact*, we see that Edwin is wearing the eagle amulet he received from his mother in *Ends/Begins*. Why do you think he is wearing it now if he is so angry at his father? What might it represent to him?
- The opening pages of *Stone* are re-visited on pages 22–23 of *The Pact*. We also find out the reasons that led to James refusing to see Edwin in the opening pages of *Ends/Begins*. How does this information fill in some of the story’s gaps from those pages? Do they change your perception of these events? If so, how?
- James has entered a room before when Edwin was sleeping (or supposed to be sleeping). What has changed since the first incident? What does he do this time? How does his choice here relate to the words, “I thought I’d almost done it again, Edwin”? How does Edwin relate to Thomas? To himself as a little boy?
- How does “time” heal? Why is Lauren so convinced that time will heal?
- Will Edwin ever forgive James? Should he? Why or why not?

Pages 26–29

Lauren and Edwin are sitting in Edwin’s bedroom. She tells him that his father loves him and feels tremendous regret over their distant relationship. One week later, James arrives to visit with Edwin, who is looking at the picture frame containing his father’s photo. Edwin explains to James that he carries a lot of fear. James tells him, “We all get scared, son. There is always a way out.” He then takes Edwin for a drive.

On the drive, James says that one thing that has helped him conquer his fear and sense of hopelessness is “coming to know our ways,” – the cultural ways of the Cree. James parks the car, and as the two men begin to walk James says, “The elders say that what was done to us will touch us for 7 generations.” He explains that he is learning to forgive himself and starting to heal through “blood memory,” – that is, by looking to the past and the ways of their ancestors. Along his path of discovery, James has realized that “we are not our yesterday, we are our today, our tomorrow.” He states that it is only through living an active and responsible existence that one can define oneself. It is this wisdom that he passes on to Edwin.

The two men arrive at “The Calling River,” the place Lauren first told Edwin about in *Stone* (see pages 18–21). James suggests to Edwin that it is here where they can begin to heal their relationship, and in turn, each other.

Edwin takes off the amulet and gives it to his father, so that he can wear it as he continues his journey of healing. He tells his crying father that he forgives him. Edwin then leaves to find his own path while James sits by the river, accompanied by the spirit of Thomas.

Discussion questions:

- By this point, we have seen several examples of “healing” from various sicknesses throughout the 7 Generations series. In a chart, recount all of them and of how characters recovered from these sicknesses. Are there similar “medicines”?
- James asks Edwin if the dream catcher helps him. James states that he still “has nightmares” Has this cultural object lost its power? What has happened? What is the real reason Edwin has nightmares? Knowing everything you know now, of what is he scared?
- “Blood memory” is a controversial term that is often misunderstood. Come up with a working definition based on how James describes it. For example, a definition could be: “An understanding of the role someone’s family and history has to play in one’s present and future.”
- The two men arrive at “The Calling River,” the place Lauren describes in *Stone* where “the Plains Cree believed their loved ones could be heard from the hunting grounds. The river’s sounds and the valley’s echoes were their voices...” How does returning here result in Edwin and James being able to access their “blood memory”?
- We now know that James is the man in the broken picture frame on the opening pages of *Stone*. Where have you seen other broken picture frames?
- Trees make a funny re-appearance on page 27, as an air-freshener. What might this represent in the way Aboriginal peoples experience nature in modern times? How does James change this for Edwin by taking him to the river?
- Why does Edwin give the amulet back to his father? How will it help him? Why does he not keep it?
- Why does Edwin leave his father at the river? What is he trying to “find”? Is their relationship healed? What do you think will happen tomorrow?

- The spirit of Thomas continues to accompany James. Will it always be there? What must James do so that the spirit of his brother does not haunt him? This is not the first time spirits have emerged at “The Calling River.” What were the circumstances that led to the ancestors of James and Edwin encountering other spirits there? Are there any similarities in these spirits and how they engage with human beings?

Page 30 and Back Inside Cover

A montage – an artistic collection of small images – is shown on page 30. At the centre is Edwin, surrounded by all of the main characters from the 7 Generations series: Stone, White Cloud, Thomas, his parents, and himself. Beside him sits a roaring fire, and from inside of him emerges a roaring bear. A full moon sits in the sky overhead and the stars surround all.

On the inside cover, two hands – one a child’s and the other an adult’s – reach for each other over the untied eagle amulet.

Discussion questions:

- Is this the ending of the story? Why or why not? Do you feel satisfied with this ending?
- Where have you seen similar montages? Is this a “cover” of a new story?
- Is Edwin “transforming”? How? Why into a bear? Why beside a fire? Why surrounded by his ancestors and relations?

NOTE: You may want to reflect on the significance of the bear in Plains Cree culture.

- Who is carrying the eagle amulet in each image in the montage? What do all of these character share?
- Where is the bear emerging from? Why is an eagle not emerging?
- Whose hands are on the back inside cover? Why do they not touch? Why is the eagle amulet untied? Who might wear it next, if anyone?

3. Applying (after reading)

Reflection and Discussion Prompts

- What surprised you about this story? What did not?
- Do you have any questions about this story? Is there anything that still needs “to be concluded”?
- What research could you do to learn more about the following issues that are raised in the story:
 - › Plains Cree culture
 - › Canadian, Aboriginal, and your own history
 - › Health and suicide
 - › Resiliency
 - › Parenting
 - › Senses of family and community
 - › Residential school and intergenerational legacies
 - › Physical, emotional, sexual abuses
- Pick one section that you think is the most important or interesting in *The Pact*. In one paragraph, explain why you picked this particular section.
- What is the most evident message in this novel that the author and illustrator wish to convey to you? What is the most important message? How does this message influence your thoughts on any of the abovementioned themes?
- Have you viewed any stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples in this story? How are they the same as or different from popular representations of stereotypes in the media? How have the author and the illustrator engaged with these stereotypes to get you to think about them in different ways?
- What is “healing”? What constitutes “healing”? Is this different for Aboriginal peoples than for other Canadians?

Class Activities

Taking Alternate Perspectives

- Have James write a letter to Edwin that explains why he has been gone for so many years. Have James express his thoughts and feelings and what he understands and has learned from his life, his recovery, and his time away from his family.
- Have Lauren and James write a series of emails to each other, discussing (1) James’s healing journey, (2)

their son, Edwin, and (3) when and why James should return “home.”

Responding to the Genre

- How do the artist’s style and choice of font and illustrations influence and/or communicate the story and mood of the graphic novel? How might different choices in these areas change the story? How do illustrations add to or detract from the story?
- Choose a piece of music and create a live-action “music video,” telling the story of *The Pact*. Use definitive ways to illustrate the time changes. If desired, a video recording can also be made.
- Make a collage to show all of the themes, ideas, and images that tell the story of the 7 Generations series. Make sure to have each character’s life represented in some way.

Historical and Cultural Responses

- Draw a timeline chart that includes all of the important events from the entire 7 Generations series. Add significant events from Cree and Canadian history to create a “complete” picture of the story.
- Have students write their own historical “story,” using the 7 Generations series as a guide (or template). Bring to class three or four photographs of ancestors from different time periods. (Have on hand a selection of dated photographs from different time periods for students who forget to bring in photographs or who do not have any to bring to the classroom.) In preparation for this activity, students can ask family members questions about the people and time periods in the photographs. In an oral or written presentation, have students answer the following questions:
 - › Who were my ancestors’ family and community? Were they different from mine today?
 - › What kinds of things did my ancestors enjoy? Dislike? How are these similar to or different from the kinds of things I enjoy or dislike today?
 - › What were any obstacles my ancestors faced? How were these different from or similar to ones I face?
 - › What things from the past do I wish still existed today? What things from the past am I glad are different?
 - › Of all the things in my family’s past, what has changed most drastically over the years? What caused these drastic changes? Could these changes have been avoided?

- › Does learning about my history help me learn about myself?

Optional: Assignment can be completed through a news media documentary or film narrative.

Learning Through Inquiry

- As a class, discuss the main messages of the graphic novel, highlight key concepts, and think of five to ten higher-level questions that emerge from your responses to the text and additional readings. This may be displayed in the form of a web to help students work either individually or with a partner to research one important idea related to the graphic novel. Refer to the listed websites and further related readings and texts to help students in their research.
- Have students think of three questions they would ask each character, and then write each character’s fictional responses. Create a short monologue for each character and present to the class or hand in.

Inquiry Assignment for Students

- After reading and discussing *The Pact*, have each student and a partner formulate a question they want to pursue further. This question could be regarding plot, history, theme, or an artistic one for the author/illustrator on some aspect of the graphic novel (such as shadows, hair, hands, Aboriginal objects and images). Student pairs can then create displays based on their research. Students may include text, visuals, sounds, video, or any medium that is deemed appropriate.

Optional: Students can also give a four-to-seven minute presentation that explains the display.

Research Steps

Photocopy or write out the following for students:

- Choose a question, then make note of what you and your partner already know about the question. Assess whether you have enough of a base to conduct research into this topic.
- Find at least three different sources of relevant information for answering your question. Take notes on each source, recording source information. Reflect on the quality of the source information. Have you included both print and Internet sources?
- Select and present the information using summaries, paraphrases, and quotations.

- Develop a display (pictures, text, symbols, objects, artifacts, models, sounds, borders, other visuals) to best represent the learning from your inquiry.

Multi-Genre Narrative Project

Have students complete multi-genre projects based on issues raised during the reading of the 7 Generations series. Give students a great deal of flexibility over the design and creation, and encourage a form of oral presentation where they explain their work to the class and/or community. Explain to students that their projects can take on a variety of forms – for example: short essay, photo exhibit, sculpture, interview (with an “expert” or person who has experienced similar issues or events), a survey (with conclusions from its “findings”), painting, PowerPoint presentation, music video, role-playing game, poetry, scripted scene, debate, speech, or graphic expression. Although you do not need to allot a minimum or maximum time-frame to this project – it depends on the teacher and classroom – remind students to be realistic about the amount of time they spend preparing. Assessment should include: thesis (intention and purpose for project), expression (intended audience, use of language), detail (clarity and attention to aesthetics), organization (structure, coherency), voice (research and knowledge).

Possible projects could emerge from one of the following questions:

- Aboriginal peoples have had to deal with stereotypes that often undermine, poke fun at, and slight them. Assess the way(s) Aboriginal peoples are portrayed throughout the 7 Generations series. Examine some of the ways these stereotypes are engaged, used, and undermined in various ways.
- Aboriginal writers and storytellers have fought a long battle to be able to tell their stories. Analyze the 7 Generations series, and find out information about the author and the illustrator, their communities, and their culture(s). How important is it that individuals tell stories from and about their culture? How does a story change when it is told by someone not from that culture?
- Aboriginal peoples are continually discovering and re-discovering their identity through their artistic creations. Examine the 7 Generations series, and find specific ways in which Aboriginal peoples have identified themselves culturally, historically, spiritually, and/or physically. Explore how Plains Cree

identity is constructed by this series and how this identity continues to grow and change in the present.

- Residential schools, and the legacies that have come out of this experience, is an issue for all Canadians. Explore how it is currently represented in media, on the Internet, and on television, and show how different Canadians are engaging its impacts in a multitude of ways. Provide three recommendations on how Canadians can come to understand and heal from this very difficult issue.
- Healing is a predominant theme in the 7 Generations series. Aboriginal cultures use the term *healing* to describe many facets of their ceremonies, expressions, and life. Many refer to it as “holistic.” What encapsulates this sort of healing? What are all of the parts of the series that go into healing? Why is holistic healing necessary?
- Graphic novels are, arguably, one of the most vibrant and active forms of literary expression today. Yet, they are not often recognized as holding the same merit as novels, short stories, and poems. Examine the history of the genre of graphic novels, and show how they differ and echo expressions by novelists and poets. Also explore the different forms of graphic novels that exist, and particularly those by Aboriginal graphic novelists.

RESOURCES

FURTHER READINGS, RELATED TEXTS, AND MEDIA

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Saul, John Ralston. *A Fair Country: Telling Truths About Canada*. Toronto: Penguin, 2008.

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<www.creeculture.ca>

Aboriginal Healing Foundation
<www.ahf.ca>

Aboriginal Literature in Canada: A Teacher's Resource Guide
<www.r4r.ca/en/resource/aboriginal-literature-in-canada>

Aboriginal Peoples of Saskatchewan
<http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/aboriginal_peoplesof_saskatchewan.html>

Assembly of First Nations

<www.afn.ca>

The Basic Indian Stereotypes

<www.bluecorncomics.com/stbasics.htm>

Canada: A People's History

<www.cbc.ca/history>

Canada in the Making

<www2.canadiana.ca>

The Canadian Encyclopedia

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Cree

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<www.indigenouspeople.net/>

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North American Pre-Contact Native Culture Areas GIS Map

<www.kstrom.net/isk/maps/cultmap.html>

The Plains Cree

<www.schoolnet.ca/aboriginal/Plains_Cree/contents-e.html>

Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre – Cree Ethnography and History

<www.sicc.sk.ca/heritage/ethnography/cree/history/>

The Shingwauk Project: Indian Residential Schools Research Centre

<www.shingwauk.auc.ca>

Through the Eyes of the Cree: The Art of Allen Sapp

<www.virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/allensapp/>

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

<www.trc.ca>

University of Saskatchewan Archives – kinanāskomitin

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